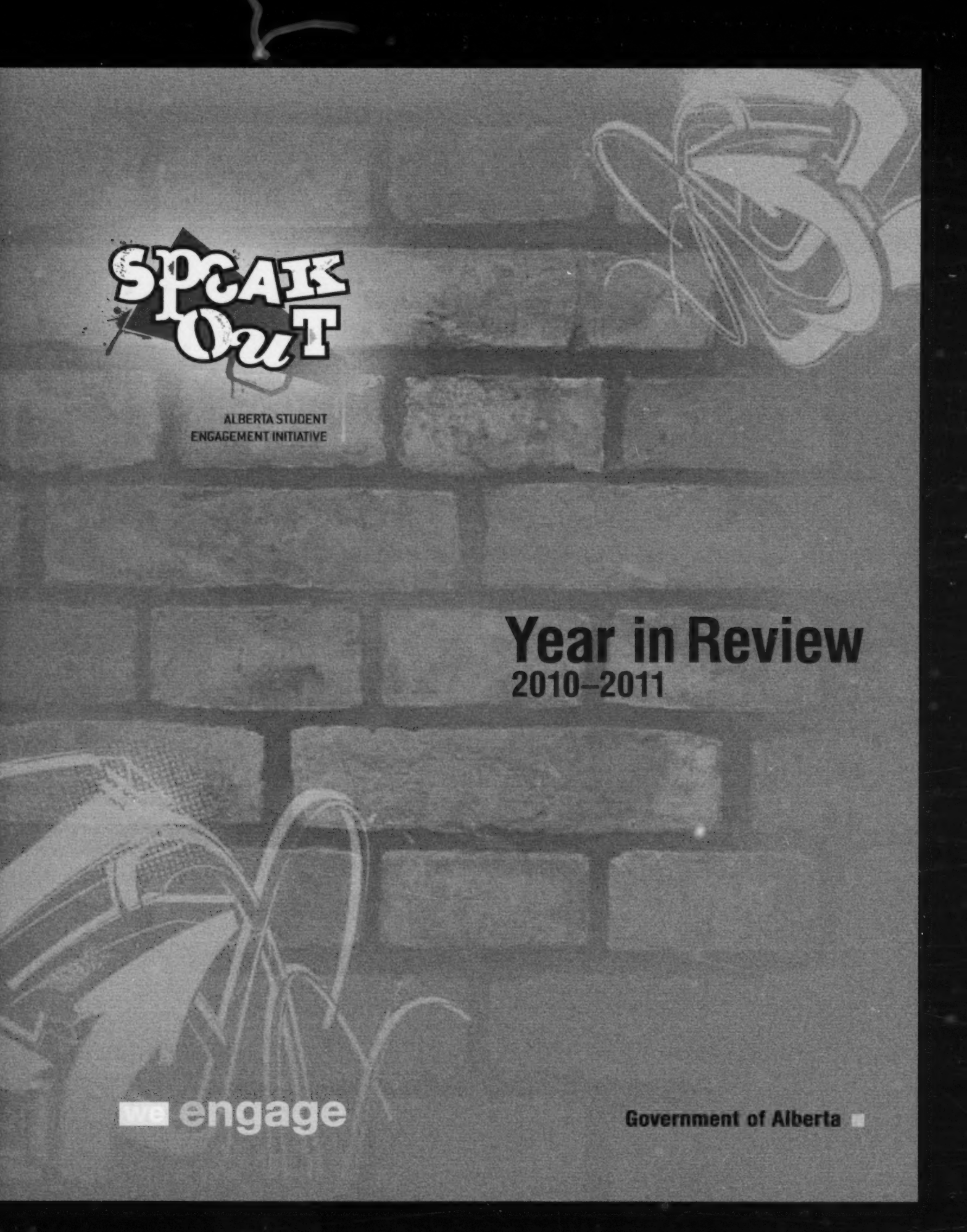

Year in Review
2010–2011

we engage

Government of Alberta

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of Alberta youth we spoke to at the *Speak Out* forums, at the Annual *Speak Out* Conference, and through the *Speak Out* website (**www.speakout.alberta.ca**) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Alberta.

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Speak Out Highlights

The *Speak Out* team held 20 *Speak Out* forums in 18 school jurisdictions and fulfilled its original mandate to conduct one in-person *Speak Out* forum in every school jurisdiction in Alberta.

Student delegates participating in the 3rd Annual *Speak Out* Conference provided opinions and input on programs and products that the Ministry is currently addressing. The Minister's Student Advisory Council worked with Alberta Education staff to develop, facilitate, and present workshops.

The 3rd Annual *Speak Out* Conference included 223 students and 93 chaperones, parents, and educators from 58 communities around Alberta.

Across the province, students hosted and led 88 forums using the *Speak Out* DVD toolkit in 32 school jurisdictions.

Members of the Minister's Student Advisory Council held *Speak Out* forums in their schools and communities and then met with the Minister to share their results. They also ensured that student engagement remained high on the priority list of their local school jurisdictions.

Through the *Speak Out* team-led and student-led forums using the DVD toolkit, the *Speak Out* team heard from 3,928 students in 43 of the 62 school jurisdictions.

Leading the nation in best practices of student engagement, the *Speak Out* team chairs the national committee on student engagement.

Hits on the website totalled nearly 400,000.

The *Speak Out* team worked with several school jurisdictions in gathering student voice using the DVD toolkit with hundreds of their students. One school held the biggest *Speak Out* forum ever, with every one of their high school students attending, and held an additional forum with all of their staff.

SPEAK OUT
ALBERTA STUDENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

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Executive Summary

Speak Out – the Alberta Student Engagement Initiative was created in response to a commitment made in the February 2008 Government of Alberta throne speech:

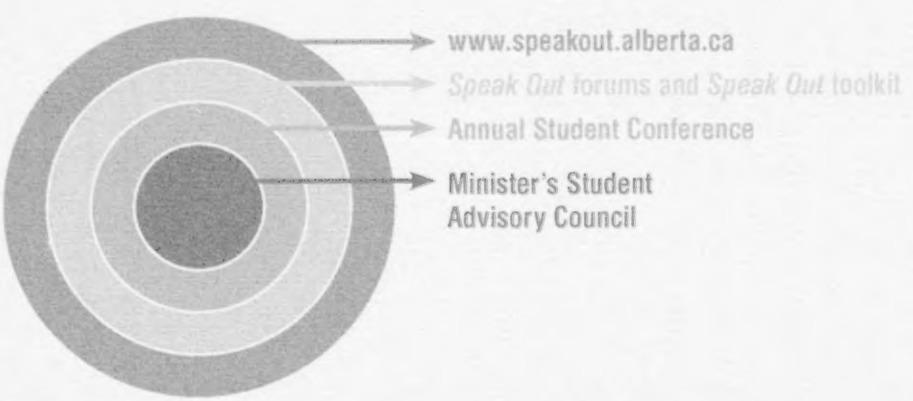
"This government will not let up on its efforts to further strengthen our education system. To provide a fresh and youthful perspective on learning, the government will establish a youth advisory committee on education. This committee will explore new and innovative ways to improve the learning opportunities available to young Albertans."

Speak Out was officially launched on November 26, 2008, and has created both a space and a means to allow students ages 14 to 19 from across Alberta to reflect on and discuss their education with each other and with key stakeholders who can actually make a difference.

Since the launch, thousands of Alberta students have shared their perspectives and ideas through the four components of *Speak Out*: the interactive and moderated website, **www.speakout.alberta.ca**; *Speak Out* forums, which are small focus group discussions held in schools across the province; the Annual *Speak Out* Conference, where students from across Alberta gather each spring to discuss educational issues; and the Minister's Student Advisory Council, which includes 24 youths who meet with the Minister of Education a few times a year.

> "Becoming a great leader is not a destination but an ongoing journey; each experience building on the last, equipping you with the tools you need to be successful. This is what *Speak Out* is. Allowing a platform for students who have made the decision to not only appreciate the value of education in Alberta, but to take the initiative to improve it."[1]

On the periphery, students are free to learn more about the initiative on the *Speak Out* website. They are also able to join the moderated discussion board and consider the issues facing youth today. As they become more comfortable, students can become more active in other components of the *Speak Out* initiative, moving towards the centre of the bull's-eye and thereby intensifying their level of engagement.



1 This report shows all quotations from participants' contributions to *Speak Out* as originally written, with no changes to spelling, grammar, or punctuation.

Speak Out Website

The *Speak Out* website, which includes moderated and interactive discussion boards and a daily blog, went live on November 3, 2008. Although many provinces in Canada have youth and student engagement initiatives, *Speak Out* is unique in that it is the only initiative with an interactive online presence, which allows students to discuss education issues and concerns and to brainstorm recommendations and solutions with their peers across the province. As a moderated website, every post is reviewed by human eyes before being posted to ensure relevance, privacy, anonymity, and safety.

From May 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011, the *Speak Out* website featured five discussion forums supported by Alberta Education and other Government of Alberta program areas, including Student Engagement; Alberta Employment and Immigration; Prevention of Bullying; the Wellness, Healthy Schools Team; and the High School Completion project.

Online forums included discussions focused on questions relating to the Annual *Speak Out* Conference 2010; youth at work; bullying; healthy students and healthy schools, high school completion; and the "Open Mic/Tribune libre" section, which gives website users the opportunity to debate, discuss, and talk about almost anything they encounter in their education.

Overall, students enjoyed the 2010 conference, especially the messages from the keynote speakers and the respect they received from both adults and students. Students agreed that youth at work does matter; however, they must balance time for homework and extracurricular activities. Bullying is an issue students are passionate about—including the idea that administration, teachers, and students (at a young age) need to be aware of, and take personal action, in order to reduce bullying behaviours. To be healthy, students need to eat well, have access to healthy food options, sleep well, and have time for additional activities that contribute to both physical and mental health. Students believe high school completion is important and is a stepping stone to their career goals.

Students took part in additional discussions about French, the International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) programs, the new math curriculum, school design, credits for extracurricular activities, learning for the future, teacher experience, summer school, school start times, student accountability, fundraising, Facebook, incentive programs, school administration, and diploma exams.

Student voice

"A leader not only has their own aspirations but pushes others to pursue theirs. *Speak Out* is not just about having your voice heard but it's also about encouraging all students, urban, rural, rich, poor, academic, non-academic, to give theirs."

Speak Out Forums

Speak Out forums allow Alberta Education to hear directly from students about their education. These forums are conducted either in person with the *Speak Out* team[2] or through the DVD toolkit. The *Speak Out* team developed a unique three-hour graphic facilitation process when they established this initiative in 2008. This process continues to be successful in gathering and capturing the student voice.

The *Speak Out* forums are conducted in a workshop format, with students working in small groups. The forum takes three hours to complete and includes a number of team-building games to get the small groups feeling comfortable and confident about working with each other. Students are asked to discuss their educational experiences and share what is working, what is not working, and what students and adults can do to improve how education looks and feels. At the conclusion of each *Speak Out* forum, the data is collated and presented in a "What We Heard" report. The report is sent to all forum participants, the school administration, and the district administration, and is posted on the *Speak Out* website for public access.

During the 2010–2011 school year, *Speak Out* reached a total of 3,928 students—76% more students than were reached in 2009–2010—through 109 *Speak Out* forums. Twenty of these forums were led by the *Speak Out* team and an astounding 88 were led by students using the *Speak Out* DVD toolkit. The *Speak Out* team sought diverse perspectives and experiences by engaging students from the various educational systems in Alberta, including public, separate, private, charter, and francophone schools and by engaging rural, urban, northern, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI), at-risk, and immigrant youth. One of the highlights for this year was a forum held at a high school in Edmonton where the entire student population of over 600 students participated in the *Speak Out* forum. There was a separate forum held for all the educators in the school. The *Speak Out* forum helped to inform planning for the school year.

At the *Speak Out* forums, students said that when they are learning at their best, there is flexibility in the way they learn, they have a positive state of mind, and they enjoy school. When asked what is holding them back, students pointed to distractions and ineffective teaching styles. When asked what adults can do to

2 The *Speak Out* team is comprised of three full-time Alberta Education staff members.

improve how education looks and feels, students said that adults (parents/guardians and educators) should provide positive support and encouragement, create a fun learning environment, and improve communication by listening to students and being open about and understanding of their concerns. Finally, when asked what actions students can take to improve how education looks and feels, the students said they should make more of an effort in their education, take initiative, be responsible for their own learning, and have respect for fellow students, teachers, and themselves.

The *Speak Out* forums were an incredible opportunity to let students know that they have a voice and that decision makers not only *want* to hear from them but *need* to hear from them.

Annual *Speak Out* Conference

The third Annual *Speak Out* Conference provided a forum for students to engage with program staff from Alberta Education and to provide the student voice on ongoing programs and initiatives in Alberta Education. A total of 201 student delegates, 22 members of the Minister's Student Advisory Council, and 93 chaperones attended the conference in Edmonton from April 15 to 17, 2011.

Students took part in a number of keynote addresses and attended three 75-minute interactive workshops led by Alberta Education's program areas. The following is a selection of feedback from the workshops.

- Students agree that financial literacy should be taught in schools, beginning with young students, by individuals with "real world" financial expertise.
- Students agree that the seven core competencies (from the draft *Inspiring Action, 2010*) cover a broad range of skills that students use in their daily lives, both inside and outside of school.
- Students feel that the layout and design of school facilities can have a major impact on their enjoyment of school—either positive or negative—and that it is important to give school design significant consideration.
- Students generally prefer that less weighting be placed on diploma exams.
- Students believe that schools can play a key role in helping students lead healthy lifestyles.
- Students feel that self-directed learning prepares students for their future—either in post-secondary education or a career—by teaching independence, time management, and organizational skills.
- Students learned about the Alberta provincial budget and revenue sources, Alberta Education's budget, and Alberta's K–9 and 10–12 education funding models.
- Students have a strong understanding of the importance of mentoring.
- Locally developed courses (LDCs) are developed and authorized by school authorities to provide their students with learning opportunities that complement provincially authorized programs. Students are positive about LDCs, as they provide a way for students to take interesting courses and express themselves.
- Students say that an engaging teacher who genuinely cares about them is ideal—they want teachers who are passionate and enthusiastic about their classes and the subject matter they teach, and who build a culture of respect in their classrooms.
- Today's students want to access and use technology for their learning.

Student voice

"We as the students have the ear of those with the power to make a difference. The fact that you are online, attended a forum, or spoke out at the conference means you are one of the many young leaders this program is built on."

Minister's Student Advisory Council

The Minister's Student Advisory Council consists of 24 youths between the ages of 14 and 19. For selection purposes, the province is divided into geographical zones, ensuring broad provincial representation. Council members are appointed to serve a one-year term, commencing in September of each year.

The council members act as ambassadors for *Speak Out* in their communities and in their schools. In preparation for their meetings with the Minister, council members use the DVD toolkit to conduct *Speak Out* forums in their schools. Under the guidance of the *Speak Out* team, council members participate in a number of development opportunities, including training in leadership, communication, media, and facilitation.

This year, the student voice from the Minister's Student Advisory Council was more sought after than ever. The council took on a leadership role and met with key Ministry of Education stakeholders for further discussions. Presentations and information-sharing sessions were held on the following topics at council meetings in September 2010, January 2011, and May 2011:

- Demystifying assessment
- Math diploma exams
- Designing schools
- Attendance board
- Education program standards and assessment

Members of the Minister's Student Advisory Council participated in and contributed student voice to the following important events and initiatives:

- Premier's Council on Economic Strategy
- Inspiring Action on Education public engagement meeting
- Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OEDC): Education Policy Meeting
- 3rd Annual *Speak Out* Conference
- Action on Curriculum – Research Roundtables
- Crime Prevention Conference
- Math and Social Science video shoots

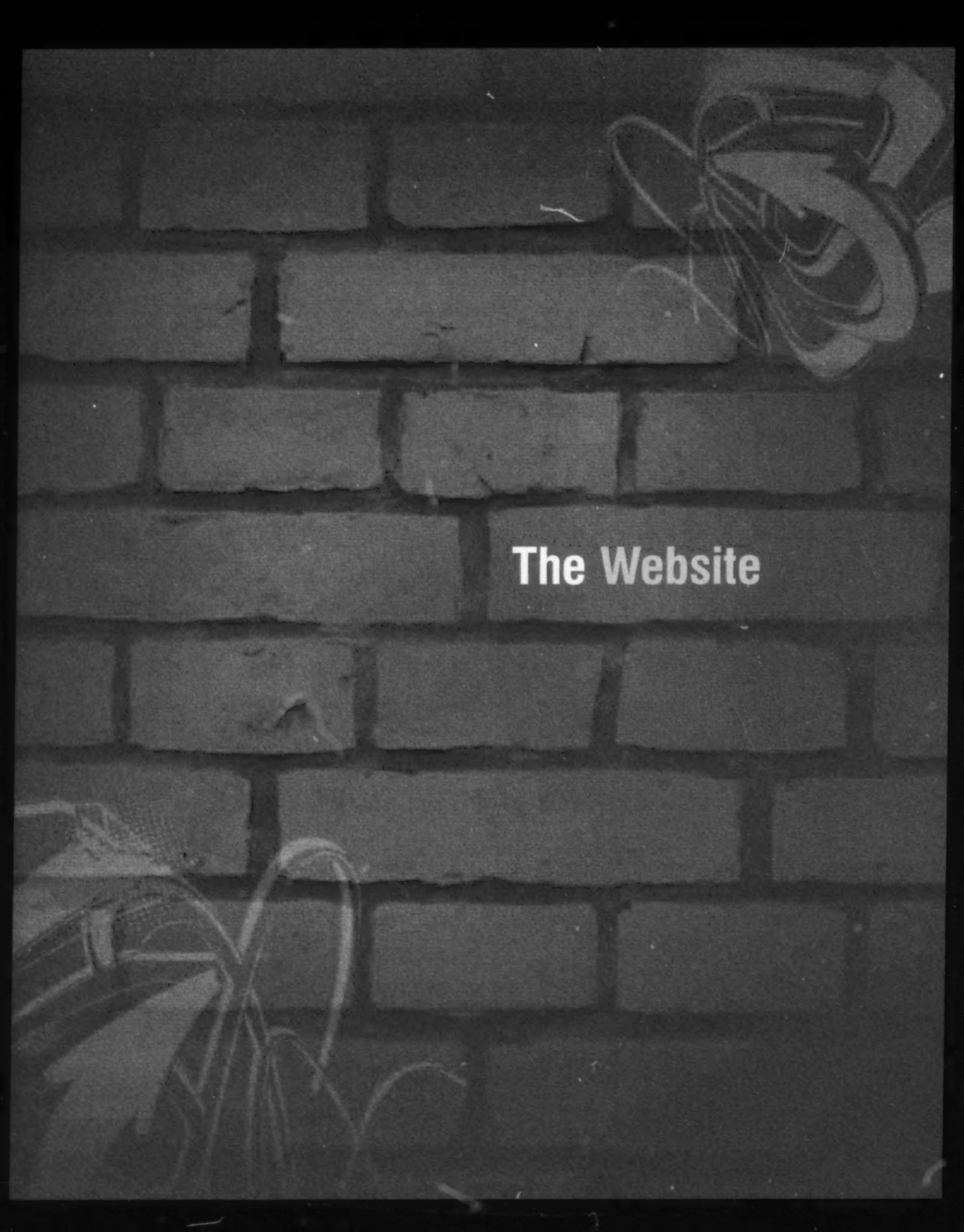
Speak Out – the Alberta Student Engagement Initiative looks forward to continuing to support students, teachers, schools, administrators, and decision makers in fostering student engagement in the 2011–2012 school year. Alberta Education remains committed to hearing the voices of young people and valuing the information they provide by acting on their ideas.

Student voice

"As a member of the Ministers Student Advisory Council I have had the unique opportunity to experience *Speak Out* first hand, and as my final term comes to an end I see no better way to finish than inspiring you to also get involved."

"Each of us are capable if we all do our part we can revolutionize education. *Speak Out*!!"

SPEAK
Out
ALBERTA STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE



The Website

The Website

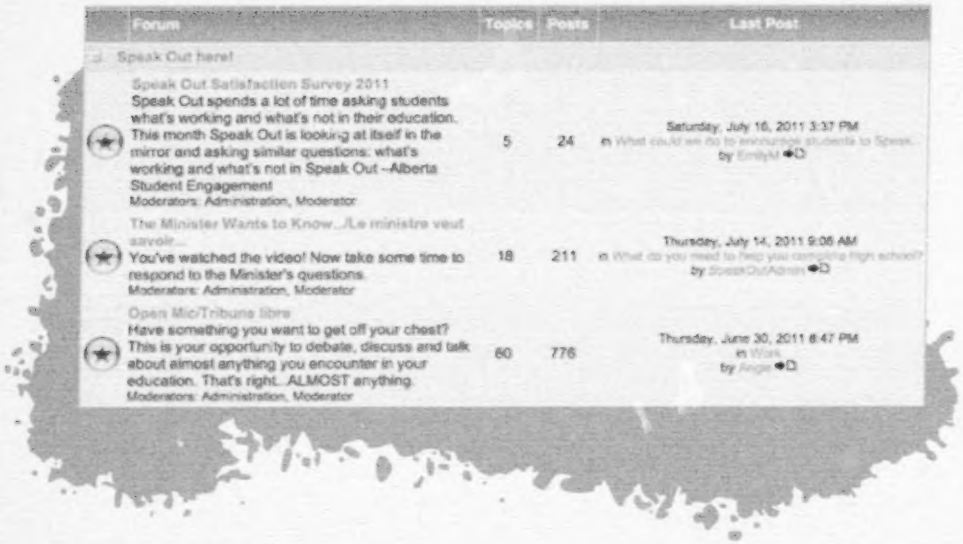
Speak Out's website, which includes moderated and interactive discussion boards and a daily blog, went live on November 3, 2008. Although many provinces in Canada have youth and student engagement initiatives, *Speak Out* is unique in that it is the only youth initiative with an interactive online presence, which allows students to discuss education issues and concerns and to brainstorm recommendations and solutions with their peers across the province. As a moderated website, every post is reviewed by human eyes before being posted, to ensure relevance, privacy, anonymity, and safety.

What Happened

The *Speak Out* website features a daily blog, student-generated discussion boards, information on the Annual *Speak Out* Conference and the Minister's Student Advisory Council, summaries of each *Speak Out* forum, weekly poll questions, and information on contests and sponsors. The "Discuss" page allows students to create their own discussion topics, view the archive of discussion posts, and respond to ongoing conversations. The discussion section is divided into several "forums" created by the *Speak Out* team, including monthly forums that feature various themes. When students register on the website, they can create a personal profile, complete with an avatar and a signature sign-off. Registered members can then create their own topics under the forums to chat with other students across Alberta about their school experiences and their education. Discussion topics vary immensely across the forums—from what kind of music is best for studying to suggestions for improving the curriculum. Students enjoy being able to connect and speak out with peers, as the tremendous response to the website has shown.

Our community rules are:

- Keep it relevant
- Keep it respectful
- Keep it safe (no names, no places, no schools, no contact info, no URLs)
- Keep an open mind
- Keep it clean


Forum
Topics
Posts
Last Post
Speak Out here!
Speak Out Satisfaction Survey 2011
Speak Out spends a lot of time asking students what's working and what's not in their education. This month Speak Out is looking at itself in the mirror and asking similar questions: what's working and what's not in Speak Out --Alberta Student Engagement
Moderators: Administration, Moderator
5
24
Saturday, July 16, 2011 3:37 PM
in What could we do to encourage students to Speak...
by EmilyM
The Minister Wants to Know.../Le ministre veut savoir...
You've watched the video! Now take some time to respond to the Minister's questions.
Moderators: Administration, Moderator
18
211
Thursday, July 14, 2011 9:06 AM
in What do you need to help you complete high school?
by SpeakOutAdmin
Open Mic/Tribune libre
Have something you want to get off your chest? This is your opportunity to debate, discuss and talk about almost anything you encounter in your education. That's right...ALMOST anything.
Moderators: Administration, Moderator
60
776
Thursday, June 30, 2011 8:47 PM
in Work
by Angie

Featured Forums

From May 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011, the *Speak Out* website featured **general discussion forums** and **featured forums** supported by other branches within Alberta Education and other government branches:

Date	Featured Forum	Hosted by
May 2010	Annual Student Conference 2010	Student Engagement
October 2010	Youth @ Work Matters	Alberta Employment and Immigration
November and December 2010	Bullying	Prevention of Bullying
February 2011	Healthy Students – Healthy Schools	Wellness, Healthy Schools Team
March 2011	High School Completion Lasts a Lifetime	High School Completion

The following is a summary of the major themes discussed in the general discussion and featured forums.

Speak Out Survey Results

- 68% of students surveyed have a job while they attend school.
- 3 out of 4 students who have a job while in school work 1–15 hours per week.

Annual Student Conference 2010

- Students enjoyed the conference, especially the message from the keynote speaker and the respect they received from both adults and students.
- Students hope to attend and encourage others to attend in 2011.

Youth @ Work Matters

- Students can use online resources and sample resumes completed in English class.
- Assistance with the job search comes from past experience, friend references, and some career advisors; students don't feel the Career and Life Management (CALM) course assists with this.
- It is important to have some work experience, but not to work too hard; some parents prefer that students do not work during high school so that they can instead concentrate on grades and extracurricular activities.
- Students gave mixed reviews on whether or not teachers should reduce the amount of homework they assign in order to accommodate students' work life.
- Jobs allow students to gain maturity, time management, and communication and social skills, and to direct their career path.
- Some schools give credit for work experience.
- Saving for post-secondary education is one prevalent reason for students to have a job while in high school.

> "I think teachers need to be more realistic with the homework load, but students need to be more realistic with how they prioritize their time."[3]

3 This report shows all quotations from participants' contributions to *Speak Out* as originally written, with no changes to spelling, grammar, or punctuation.

Bullying

- Administration needs to be aware of bullying behaviours and trained in how to support teachers and students in dealing with them.
- More severe punishments have had an impact on reducing bullying.
- If students feel that bullying is an issue at their school, they should take personal action to help resolve the issue (i.e., by becoming a leader and role model); most students would stand up to bullying.
- Bullying starts at a very young age, and kids need to know that bullying can cause long-term damage to others.
- There is power in numbers; there are ways to work together to stop bullying and to take the power away from bullies.

Healthy Students – Healthy Schools

- Being healthy is about eating right and regularly, and having healthy eating options.
- To be healthy, students need sleep, balance, and motivation; good health is both mental and physical.
- Schools need to be more flexible and reduce their workloads, in order to allow time for other activities that contribute to being healthy.

> "Being a healthy student isn't just eating healthy food. I think being a healthy student also means having opportunities to be physically active and to maintain a balance between school work, extracurricular activities, and our social lives."

Student voice

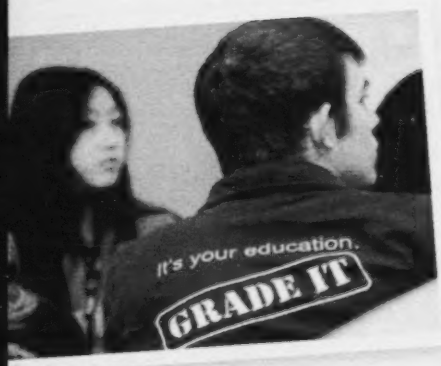
"Why not try to put together a group of people in your school and community, who will work TOGETHER to get rid of bullies. This is a TEAM effort; no one said that you had to stick up to a bully alone."

Speak Out Survey Results

- 3 out of 4 students say their school helps them live a physically active lifestyle.
- 9 out of 10 students say their school educates and helps them to eat healthy foods.
- 1 out of 2 students surveyed report having healthy food choices within their school's cafeteria, canteen, and vending machines.
- 100% of students surveyed say overall wellness and being a healthy student should be a priority in their school.

High School Completion Lasts a Lifetime

- *Dual credits (credits that count towards both a high school diploma and post-secondary diplomas, degrees, or certificates)* may be available through some schools offering international baccalaureate (IB), advanced placement (AP), or registered apprenticeship programs, etc.
- Some would like to see "cadets" offered as a dual credit towards military training.
- Most students see high school as a stepping stone to other career goals.
- Most agreed that some English, math, and science should be included in future curricula.
- Students gave mixed reviews on the relevance of social studies, career and life management (CALM), and physical education.
- Ideal courses include agricultural and mechanical studies, outdoor education, and sports performance; students want to incorporate some volunteer hours and online courses into their studies.



"Even though we 'waste' twelve years of our lives in school, when we go to leave, most of us miss something about it. As bittersweet as it was, we can take our learned work ethics, people-skills, and our book-learned information for successes with us for the rest of our lives. I mean, after all, when we've spent twelve years doing something (whether we liked it or not...) we might as well take our well-learned experiences with us, right?"

Student voice

"It's time to stop fighting what kids are using, and start embracing it."

"The focus should be on how we prepare students and help them to complete high school and diploma exams."

Open Mic

- Students expressed concern that French classes may not appropriately equip them with core language skills.
- Generally, students consider international baccalaureate (IB) superior to advanced placement (AP), given its standardization and international recognition.
- Students expressed concern that the new math curriculum will reduce Alberta's educative competiveness and that it may not be suitable for all students.
- School designs need to include lots of windows, good lighting and controlled temperature, enhanced equipment and technology, colour, student input, and lots of space.
- Credits for extracurricular activities need to extend beyond athletics, and should accurately represent an individual's investment of hours.

- Learning for the future should be designed to improve students' problem solving skills, encourage creativity and flexibility, and help them be technology-wise and focused on current and modern culture and events.
- Students expressed some concern that, in smaller schools, teachers are not specialized in the subject area they teach.
- Summer school is an appropriate length, suited to certain learning styles, and is a good opportunity to free up time in the school year for other activities.
- Having school start later each day would let students get more sleep; however, it would impact current after-school schedules for extracurricular activities, work, etc.
- Students want to see other students be accountable for their work and not be given second chances or the opportunity to make excuses.
- Students said there is limited ability to be physically active at school other than in gym class or on sports teams.
- Students suggested diversifying products at the school cafeteria, with a focus on healthy food choices.
- Facebook offers a good way to ask for homework assistance from other students.
- Incentive programs for attendance should be consistent across the province; students should not be penalized for being sick.
- Some students said school administration ignores student input; suggestions for approaching administration included sending a letter or email, scheduling a meeting, going as a group of students, or raising issues with student council.
- Students agree with diploma exams, but disagree with the 50% weighting because some students experience test anxiety and associated stress.
- Although other real-world experience for teachers before they enter the teaching profession is ideal, it is not necessarily a realistic expectation.

Speak Out Survey Results

- 83% of the students surveyed say it is important to have the opportunity to learn at their own pace.
- 7 out of 10 students surveyed say they plan to go to college or university during the first year after they finish high school.

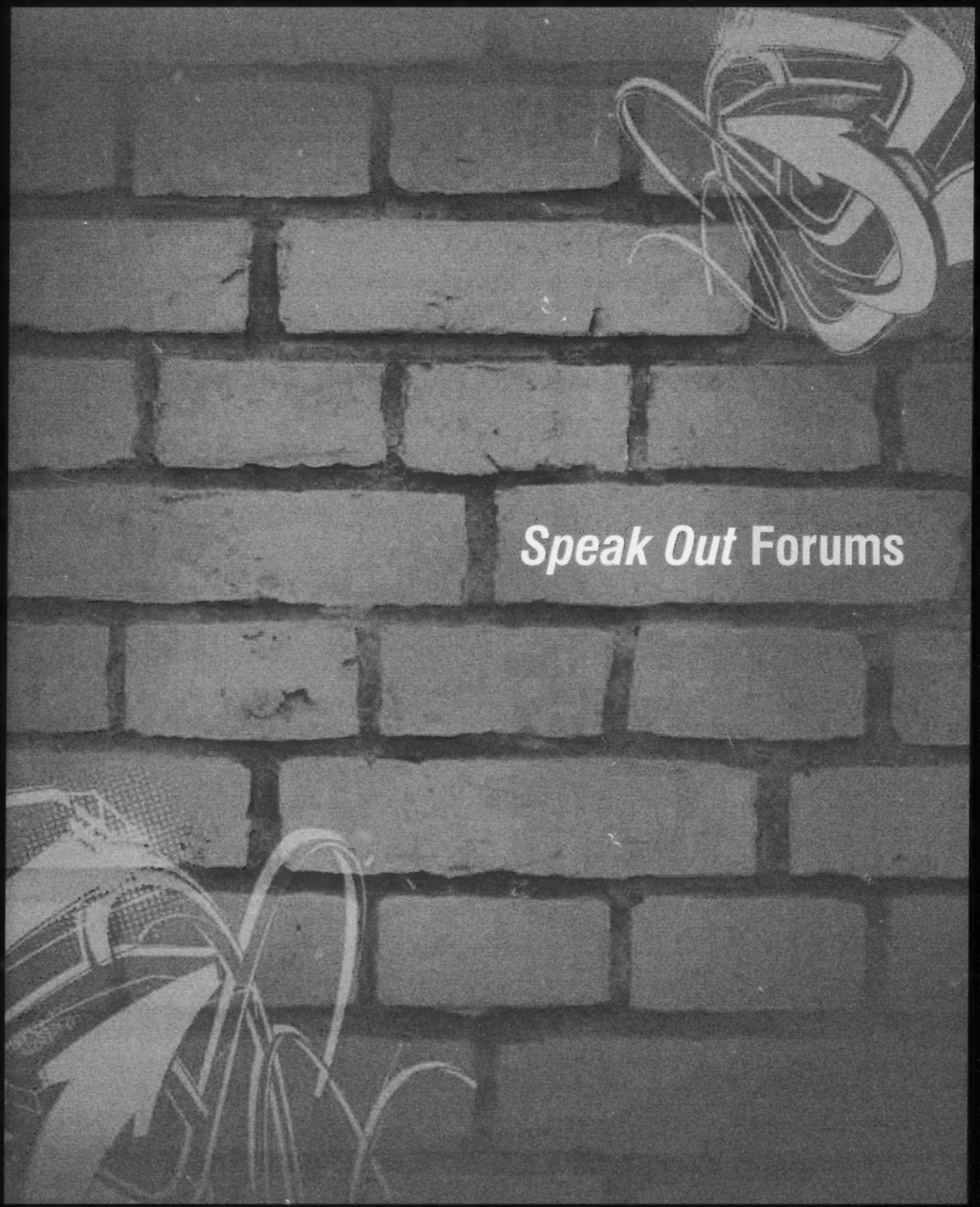
How We Did

At the end of the school year, we surveyed users, asking for feedback on the *Speak Out* website. Selected responses are listed below:

- ✔ 97% of respondents said that the registration process was easy and that the website was easy to navigate.
- ✔ 93% felt that their input on the website was useful to Alberta Education.
- ✔ 97% of respondents felt free to express themselves and their perspectives on the website.

As of March 2011, the Speak Out website had a total of 1,803 users, 442 topics, and 6,201 posts, as well as 195,525 discussion board views.

According to Google statistics, in March 2011 alone, the Speak Out website was visited from 350 cities worldwide.


Speak Out Forums

Speak Out Forums

Speak Out forums provided the opportunity for the *Speak Out* team to speak directly with students about their education. Between April 2010 and March 2011, the *Speak Out* team conducted 20 forums. Students led another 88 forums using the *Speak Out* DVD toolkit. This step-by-step toolkit was designed to ensure that anyone can host a *Speak Out* forum any time and any place. This approach has not only built local capacity and local engagement, but has also enabled more students to find their voice and speak out. Between the *Speak Out* team-led and student-led forums, the *Speak Out* team heard from 3,928 students in 43 of the 62 school districts. The forums were conducted in all varieties of educational systems in Alberta, including public, private, separate, Francophone, charter, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI), and outreach schools. The *Speak Out* team sought diverse perspectives and experiences by engaging rural, urban, northern, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI), and at-risk immigrant youth.

At each forum, students were separated into small working groups and asked to discuss their educational experiences and to share what is working, what isn't, and what both adults and students can do to improve how education looks and feels.

At the *Speak Out* forums, students said that when they are learning at their best, there is flexibility in the way they learn, they have a positive state of mind, and they are enjoying school. When asked what is holding them back, students pointed to distractions and ineffective teaching styles. When asked what adults can do to improve how education looks and feels, students said adults (parents/guardians and educators) should provide positive support and encouragement, create a fun learning environment, and improve communication by listening to students and being open to and understanding of their concerns. Finally, when asked what actions students can take to improve how education looks and feels, the students said they should make more of an effort in their education, take initiative, be responsible for their own learning, and have respect for fellow students, teachers, and themselves.

The *Speak Out* forums were an incredible opportunity to let students know that they have a voice and that decision makers not only *want* to hear from them, but *need* to hear from them.

Student voice

"I can't believe how easy the DVD toolkit was to use! It was so easy to host my own forum and get the student voice at my school."

> "One inspired young person is capable of transforming their schools; it's simply a matter of diligence and passion.[4]"

4 This report shows all quotations from participants' contributions to *Speak Out* as originally written, with no changes to spelling, grammar, or punctuation.

Where We Were

The *Speak Out* forum locations for forums held April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011, are listed below. For a detailed list of forum dates and participating schools, please refer to Appendix A.

Speak Out Team Forums

- Athabasca
- Leduc
- Taber
- Barrhead
- Namao
- Vegreville
- Calgary (2)
- Ponoka
- Wainwright (2)
- Edmonton (3)
- Falher
- Sherwood Park (2)
- Whitecourt
- High Prairie
- Stony Plain

Speak Out DVD Toolkit Forums

- Airdrie (2)
- Edmonton (9)
- Olds
- Ardrossen
- Fort McMurray (2)
- Oyen
- Arrowwood
- Grande Cache
- Paddle Prairie
- Beiseker (2)
- Blue Lake
- Grande Prairie
- Picture Butte
- Bonnyville
- Grassy Lake
- Pincher Creek
- Brant
- Hanna
- Red Earth Creek
- Calgary (16)
- High Level (2)
- Redcliffe
- Carmangay
- Iron River
- Redwater
- Champion
- Jasper
- St. Albert (3)
- Chestermere
- Lacombe
- Stettler (2)
- Coaldale (2)
- Lethbridge
- Strathmore
- Sylvan Lake
- Coalhurst
- Lloydminster (5)
- Taber
- Cochrane
- Medicine Hat (2)
- Tilley
- Crossfield
- Milo
- Vegreville
- Didsbury
- Morinville
- Vulcan
- Drayton Valley (2)
- Nobleford
- Olds
- Wabasca

"The *Speak Out* forum gives students the opportunity to propose solutions to problems in our education."

● *Speak Out* team-led forums
● *Speak Out* DVD toolkit forums

Student voice

"My forum was lots of fun. Thank you so much Speak Out team for helping make the forum a success! They sent me absolutely everything I needed for my forum"

Who We Spoke To

At the beginning of each *Speak Out* forum, students were asked a series of "getting to know you" questions. At the *Speak Out* team-led forums, we used electronic voting technology to collect responses anonymously. Once responses were submitted, results were shown using percentages and graphs. This process also allowed the students to become comfortable with the technology for later in the facilitation process and for the feedback portion of the forum.

For the forums conducted using the *Speak Out* DVD toolkit, each student filled out a student information questionnaire titled "Who's in the Room?". The following demographic percentages are based on an average of the responses collected, both electronically and through the questionnaire, from each of the 3,746 participating students in the 104 *Speak Out* forums. A complete list of questions and results is below.

1) **I am a...**

Guy – 46%
Girl – 54%

2) **I am in Grade...**

9 – 32%
10 – 26%
11 – 22%
12 – 9%
Other – 11%

3) **I'm on Facebook, MySpace, or Twitter.**

Yes – 87%
No – 13%

4) **I have (#) people listed as friends or contacts on these social networking sites.**

None – 13%
1–99 – 13%
100–249 – 31%
250–499 – 33%
500 or more – 10%

5) **I usually do about (#) hours of homework on an average night.**

0 – 22%
1 – 50%
2 – 18%
3 – 6%
4 or more – 4%

6) **I am involved in... (students selected top 2 answers)**

Fine arts – 17%
Drama – 3%
School club – 14%
Sports team – 38%
Leadership – 17%
Music – 7%
Yearbook – 4%

7) **I am physically active (work out, play on a sports team, etc.).**

Yes – 85%
No – 15%

8) **I volunteer.**

Yes – 59%
No – 41%

9) **I have a part-time job.**

Yes – 35%
No – 65%

10) **At my part-time job, I work about (#) hours each week.**

0 – 64%
1–10 – 20%
11–20 – 11%
21–30 – 4%
31 or more – 1%

11) **I usually get (#) hours of sleep on an average night.**

Less than 5 – 4%
5 – 3%
6 – 13%
7 – 29%
8 – 33%
9 or more – 18%

12) **I speak a second language.**

Yes – 48%
No – 52%

13) **I go to school each day because... (students selected top 2 answers)**

I enjoy it – 7%
My parents make me – 10%
Of my friends – 15%
There's nothing else to do – 4%
I want to get skills for a job – 11%
I want to get my high school diploma – 15%
I want to stay out of trouble – 3%
Of what I learn in classes – 5%
Extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, music, etc.) – 8%
I want to go to college or university – 22%

14) **How do you learn best? (students selected top 2 answers)**

By listening – 13%
By seeing – 19%
By doing – 30%
By working with others – 15%
By working independently – 12%
By using technology – 11%

What Happened

In preparation for each *Speak Out* forum, the *Speak Out* team worked with the leadership of each school to ensure that a diverse student population would participate in the session. The *Speak Out* team asked for a group of students that represented the voices of all provincial youth, from all different backgrounds—ranging from the academic keeners to those who struggle in school, from those who are into sports to those who love the arts, and everything in between.

At the beginning of each *Speak Out* forum, an overview of *Speak Out* was provided. Students were separated into a number of working groups with a table leader. The table leader helped the students keep on task, facilitate discussions, and capture their ideas.

Each *Speak Out* forum included activities and games for team development within each working group. These team-building activities were interspersed throughout the facilitation questions.

The Facilitation

The *Speak Out* forum process included individual and group brainstorming, clustering of similar ideas, theming, and voting. Small working groups of up to 10 students were formed for the facilitation process. Through graphic facilitation, the groups easily captured the thoughts and suggestions for each question.

The participants were asked to respond to the following four questions:

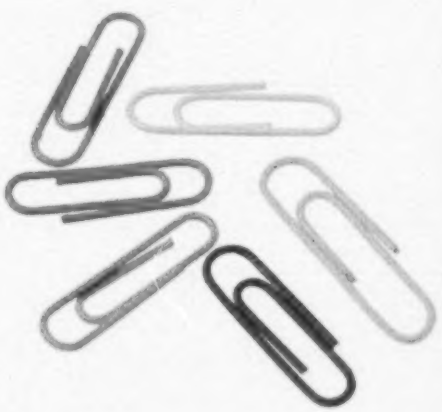
1. What does it look like when you are learning at your best?
2. What is holding you back from learning at your best?
3. What actions can adults take to improve how education looks and feels?
4. What actions can students take to improve how education looks and feels?

The facilitation process involved the following steps:

1. Individual brainstorming: Each student came up with several ideas and wrote down one idea per sticky note.
2. Group brainstorming: In working groups, each participant shared his or her two or three most important ideas, and the group discussed them.
3. Clustering ideas: The working group clustered similar thoughts.
4. Naming the clusters: The group named each cluster by its main idea or theme.
5. Identifying two themes: Each group chose its top two themes to be posted and considered by the larger group.
6. Forum group voting: Each participant voted on all the themes identified, choosing the two ideas that they saw as most important.

Student voice

"The Administration at my school is trying to implement our feedback from the Forum."

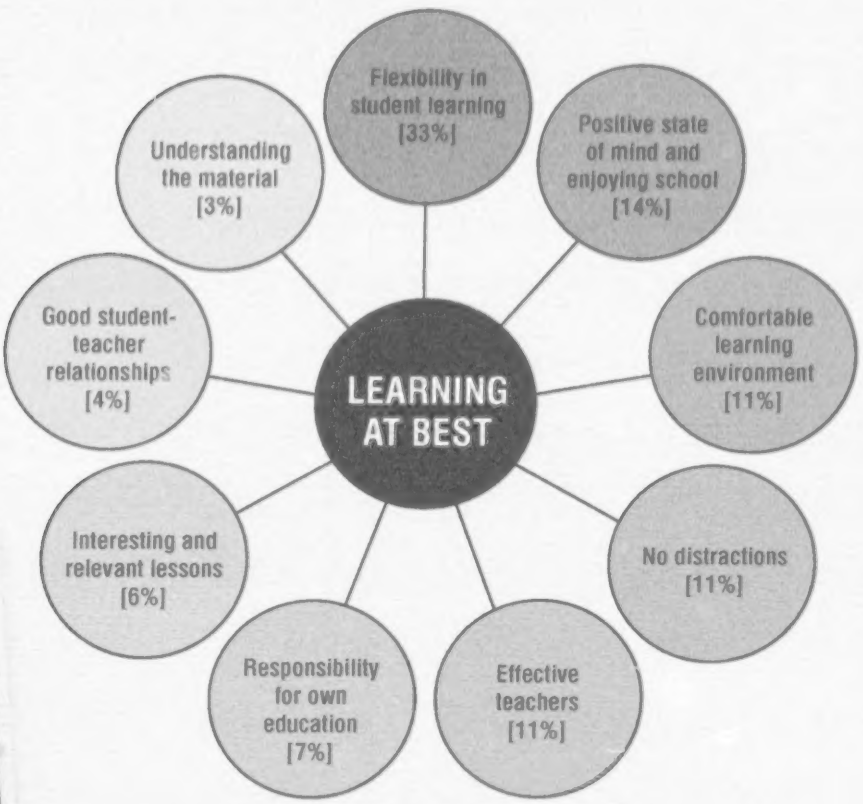


What We Heard

Below, we provide more information about each question that summarizes the voices that consistently arose from each *Speak Out* forum. The table lists the top themes that consistently recurred in the student responses in order of importance, as ranked by the students, and provides more detailed explanations and examples of each.

Question one: What does it look like when you are learning at your best?

The purpose of this question was to identify the conditions and tools required for optimal learning. Students were encouraged to consider how they learn best, both inside and outside of school. The following diagram and table summarize the issues that consistently arose from each *Speak Out* forum. General themes can be found below, including the percentage of student votes each response received. More detailed explanations can be found in the table.


LEARNING AT BEST
Flexibility in student learning [33%]
Positive state of mind and enjoying school [14%]
Comfortable learning environment [11%]
No distractions [11%]
Effective teachers [11%]
Responsibility for own education [7%]
Interesting and relevant lessons [6%]
Good student-teacher relationships [4%]
Understanding the material [3%]

Student voice

"I like it when the classroom environment is comfortable, stress-free, fun, and we get to work with and learn from each other."

Themes	Examples of the Student Voice* When Students are Learning at Their Best
Flexibility in student learning (33%)	• Variety of teaching styles • Ability to be involved in class • Hands-on activities • Group work • Ability to listen to music • Interactive learning
Positive state of mind and enjoying school (14%)	• Enjoying school • Confident • Not stressed • Happy • Well rested • Interested
Comfortable learning environment (11%)	• Comfortable • Relaxed • Quiet • No fear of failure • Small class sizes • Good temperature
No distractions (11%)	• Able to concentrate • Able to focus • Silence • Working alone
Effective teachers (11%)	• Knowledgeable • Engaging • Interesting • Helpful • Passionate • Flexible • Communicate well • Motivating
Responsibility for own education (7%)	• Participate in class • Work hard • Prepare for class • Pay attention • Get homework done on time • Have an opinion
Interesting and relevant lessons (6%)	• Interested in what's being taught • Enjoy what I'm learning • Relevant to life and future
Good student-teacher relationships (4%)	• Teachers care • Teachers pay attention • Teachers take a personal interest in students • Students and teachers co-operate
Understanding the material (3%)	• Comprehend the material • Get good grades • Accomplish something

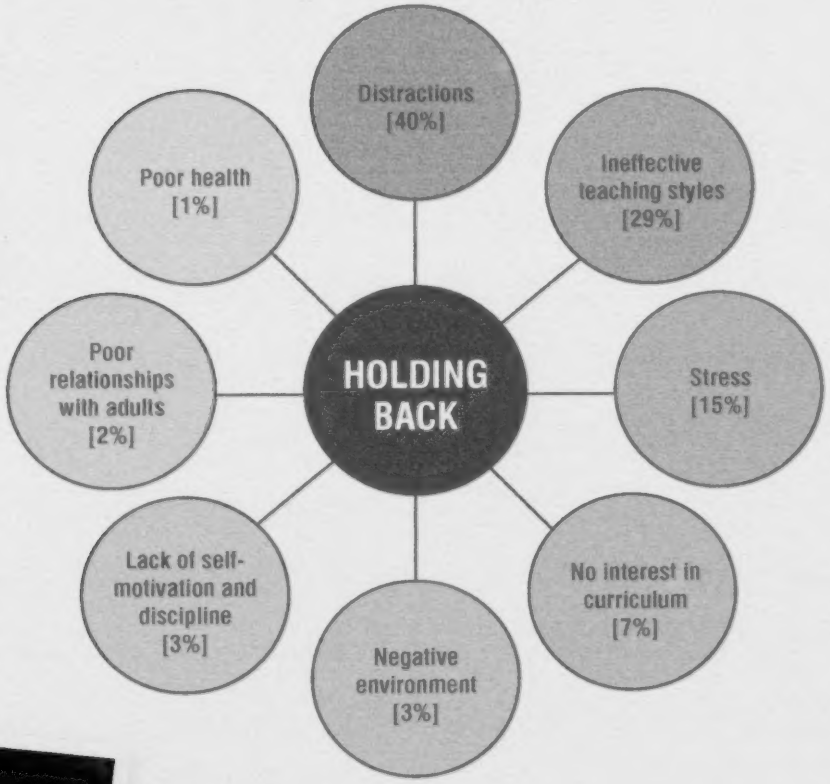
* These themes are taken directly from student input and are listed in order of importance as ranked by students.

Student voice

"There is a greater interest in what goes on in the school since I hosted a *Speak Out* Forum and the majority of the high school students are actually getting involved and attending school board/parent meetings to get their voice recognized."

Question two: What is holding you back from learning at your best?

The purpose of this question is to have students reflect on the boundaries or limitations that prevent them from reaching their own optimal learning. The following diagram and table summarize the issues that consistently arose from each *Speak Out* forum. The themes are taken directly from input provided by the students and are listed in the table in order of importance as ranked by students. General themes can be found below, including the percentage of student votes each response received. More detailed explanations can be found in the table.



Student voice

"I can't learn when I am tired and hungry."

Themes	Examples of the Student Voice* What is Holding Students Back from Learning at Their Best?
Distractions (40%)	• Drama • Gossip • Personal distractions • Home/personal life • Loud students
Ineffective teaching styles (29%)	• Inappropriate methods and material • Easily straying from topic • Teachers who aren't flexible or understanding • Boring teachers • Bad attitudes about the teaching • Intimidation
Stress (15%)	• Overwhelmed by school and personal life • Don't have support • High expectations • Too much homework • Not enough sleep • Bullying • Not enough time to complete assignments
No interest in curriculum (7%)	• Irrelevant classes • Boring topics
Negative environment (3%)	• Poor facilities • Negative classroom environment • Teachers and students who don't care about the school • Lack of positivity
Lack of self-motivation and discipline (3%)	• Procrastination • Poor time management • No motivation
Poor relationships with adults (2%)	• Lack of support and understanding • Unequal treatment • No communication between students and teachers
Poor health (1%)	• Poor eating habits • Not enough sleep • Substance abuse

* These themes are taken directly from student input and are listed in order of importance as ranked by students.

Question three: What actions can adults take to improve how education looks and feels?

The purpose of this question was to allow students to be creative and provide solutions or strategies that adults could undertake for overcoming the obstacles, boundaries, or limitations identified in the second prompt (i.e., What is holding you back from learning at your best?). Students were asked to provide as many solutions as possible. The following diagram and table summarize the solutions that consistently arose from each *Speak Out* forum. The themes are taken directly from input provided by the students and are listed in the table in order of importance as ranked by students. General themes can be found below, including the percentage of student votes each response received. More detailed explanations can be found in the table.

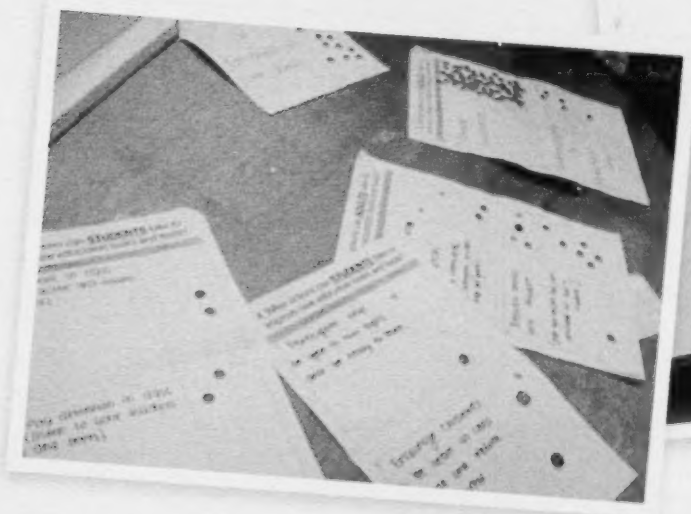
ADULT ACTIONS
Provide positive support and encouragement [24%]
Create fun environment [22%]
Improve communication [21%]
Use a variety of teaching styles and methods [17%]
Place less pressure on students [8%]
Be respectful [6%]
Place less emphasis on the diploma exam [3%]

Theme	Student Suggestions for Adult Actions*
Provide positive support and encouragement (24%)	• Encourage students • Provide support and guidance • Be involved!
Create a fun environment (22%)	• Provide more options for courses and activities • Make the material interesting and fun to learn • Provide more interaction and hands-on projects
Improve communication (21%)	• Listen to students • Be open to student ideas • Be understanding of student concerns, schedules, and needs • Build positive teacher-student relationships
Use a variety of teaching styles and methods (17%)	• Use a variety of teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles • Be creative with teaching styles • Be flexible in the classroom (e.g., allow music)
Place less pressure on students (8%)	• Allow more time for homework • Have reasonable expectations • Be understanding of the demands placed on students
Be respectful (6%)	• Treat students with respect • Treat all students fairly and equally • Have confidence and trust in students' abilities
Place less emphasis on the diploma exam (3%)	• Decrease the weight of the diploma exam

* These themes are taken directly from student input and are listed in order of importance as ranked by students.

Student voice

"I think the best way that adults can improve my educational experience is to use more technology in class."

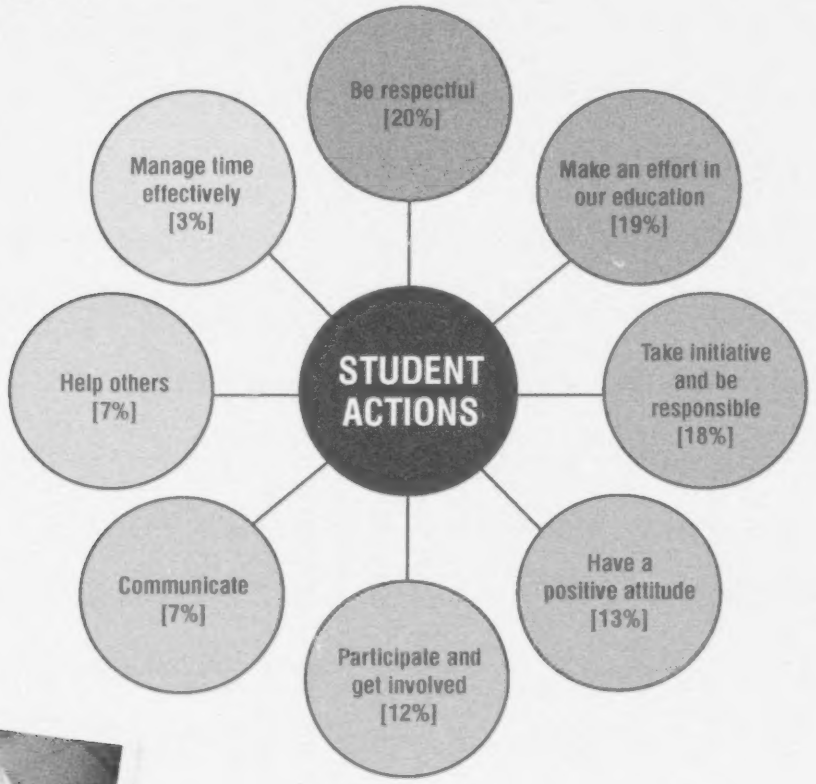


Question four: What actions can students take to improve how education looks and feels?

The purpose of this question was to allow students to be creative and provide solutions or strategies that they, as students, can do for overcoming the obstacles, boundaries or limitations identified in the second prompt (i.e., what is holding you back from learning at your best?). Students were asked to provide as many solutions as possible. The following diagram and table summarize the solutions that consistently arose from each *Speak Out* forum. The themes are taken directly from input provided by the students and are listed in the table in order of importance as ranked by students. General themes can be found below, including the percentage of student votes each response received. More detailed explanations can be found in the table.

"We need to position students as full owners of what they learn. Connectedness needs to be at the core of the academic experience for all students."

– Adam Fletcher, a leading advocate, author, motivational speaker, and educator focused on youth voice and student engagement


STUDENT ACTIONS
Be respectful [20%]
Make an effort in our education [19%]
Take initiative and be responsible [18%]
Have a positive attitude [13%]
Participate and get involved [12%]
Communicate [7%]
Help others [7%]
Manage time effectively [3%]

Theme	Student Suggestions for Student Actions*
Be respectful (20%)	• Treat others with respect (students, teachers, yourself) • Be patient • Don't interrupt
Make an effort in our education (19%)	• Be prepared for class • Do homework and complete assignments • Pay attention and don't be a distraction • Stay focused and take an interest
Take initiative and be responsible (18%)	• Take responsibility for your own learning • Ask questions if you need help • Don't blame others • Act maturely
Have a positive attitude (13%)	• Be positive about school and learning • Be enthusiastic • Have fun!
Participate and get involved (12%)	• Participate in class • Take part in school activities • Get involved in the community
Communicate (7%)	• Communicate with teachers, parents, and classmates about your needs and concerns • Share your feelings and give feedback • Speak out for what you need
Help others (7%)	• Encourage, support, and help others • Share thoughts and ideas • Take a leadership role • Co-operate
Manage time effectively (3%)	• Manage your time effectively • Find a balance • Be organized

* These themes are taken directly from student input and are listed in order of importance as ranked by students.

The *Speak Out* team understands the importance of being open and transparent in this process. Within days of delivering each *Speak Out* forum, the student-generated data was transcribed into a "What We Heard" report and posted on the *Speak Out* website. The report was also sent to the forum host, all forum participants, the school administration, and the district administration, and was posted on the *Speak Out* website for public access.

> "Meaningful Student Involvement, or MSI, is a model for school improvement that strengthens the commitment of students to education, community and democracy. MSI re-envisions the roles of students in equitable partnerships with adults throughout the learning environment. It promotes student engagement by securing roles for students in every facet of the educational system and recognizes the unique knowledge, experience and perspective of each individual student."
>
> – Adam Fletcher, a leading advocate, author, motivational speaker, and educator focused on youth voice and student engagement

Appendix – *Speak Out* Forum Schedule

October 5, 2010 • Ponoka • Ponoka Composite High
Holy Family Catholic Regional Division No. 37

October 7, 2010 • Taber • W.R. Myers High School
Horizon School Division No. 67

October 13, 2010 • Athabasca • Edwin Parr Composite High School
Aspen View Regional Division No. 19

October 14, 2010 • Barrhead • Barrhead Composite High School
Pembina Hills Regional Division No.7

October 19, 2010 • Falher • Ecole Heritage High School
Northwest Francophone Education Region No. 1

October 20, 2010 • High Prairie • St. Andrew's School
Holy Family Catholic Regional Division No. 37

October 21, 2010 • Whitecourt • St. Joseph School
Living Waters Catholic Regional Division No. 42

October 26, 2010 • Sherwood Park • Bev Facey High School
Elk Island Public Schools Regional Division No. 14

October 27, 2010 • Calgary • West View School
Calgary School District No. 19

October 28, 2010 • Calgary • Notre Dame High School
Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 1

November 2, 2010 • Wainwright • Wainwright High School
Buffalo Trail Public Schools Regional Division No. 28

November 3, 2010 • Wainwright • Blessed Sacrament School
East Central Alberta Catholic Separate Schools Regional Division No. 16

November 4, 2010 • Vegreville • Vegreville Composite High School
Elk Island Public Schools Regional Division No. 14

November 16, 2010 • Leduc • Leduc Composite High School
Black Gold Regional Division No. 18

November 17, 2010 • Sherwood Park • Archbishop Jordan Catholic High School
Elk Island Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 41

November 18, 2010 • Edmonton • McNally High School
Edmonton School District No. 7

November 23, 2010 • Namao • Sturgeon Composite High School
Sturgeon School Division No. 24

November 24, 2010 • Stony Plain • Memorial Composite High School
Parkland School Division No. 70

November 30, 2010 • Edmonton • Fresh Start
Edmonton Catholic Separate School District No. 7

December 1, 2010 • Edmonton • Ecole J.H. Picard School
Edmonton Catholic Separate School District No. 7

DVD Toolkit Forums (April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011)*

February 24, 2010 • Edmonton • Old Scona Academic High
Edmonton School District No. 7

February 24, 2010 • Medicine Hat • Crescent Heights High School
Prairie Rose School Division No. 8

February 2010 • Lethbridge • Winston Churchill High School
Lethbridge School District No. 51

March 2010 • Drayton Valley • H.W. Pickup Junior High School
Wild Rose School Division No. 66

March 2010 • Fort McMurray • Fort McMurray Public School
Fort McMurray Public School District No. 2833

April 16, 2010 • Strathmore • Golden Hills School
Golden Hills School Division No. 75

April 23, 2010 • Lloydminster • E.S. Laird Middle School
Lloydminster Public School Division

April, 2010 • Stettler • William E. Hay Composite High School
Clearview School Division No. 71

May 19, 2010 • Edmonton • J. Percy Page School
Edmonton School District No. 7

May 19, 2010 • Red Earth Creek • Red Earth Creek School
Northland School Division No. 61

May 26, 2010 • Edmonton • St. Hilda Junior High School
Edmonton Catholic Separate School District No. 7

May 2010 • Beiseker • Beiseker Community School
Rocky View School Division No. 41

May 2010 • Lloydminster • Bishop Lloyd Middle School
Lloydminster Public School Division

May 2010 • Edmonton • Vernon Barford Junior High School
Edmonton School District No. 7

June 9, 2010 • Redwater • Redwater School
Sturgeon School Division No. 24

June 11, 2010 • Lloydminster • E.S. Laird Middle School
Lloydminster Public School Division

June 11, 2010 • Tilley • Tilley Public School
Grasslands Regional Division No. 6

June 15, 2010 • Olds • Olds High School
Chinook's Edge School Division No. 73

September 1, 2010 • Ardrossan • New Horizons Charter School
New Horizons Charter School Society

September 3, 2010 • Edmonton • Lillian Osborne High School
Edmonton School District No. 7

October 2, 2010 • Edmonton • Minister's Student Advisory Council
(n/a)

October 4, 2010 • Iron River • Iron River School
Northern Lights School Division No. 69

October 26, 2010 • Edmonton • McNally High School
Edmonton School District No. 7

November 4, 2010 • Paddle Prairie • Paddle Prairie School
Northland School Division No. 61

November 5, 2010 • Redcliff • Parkside School
Prairie Rose School Division No. 8

November 8, 2010 • Lloydminster • E.S. Laird Middle School
Lloydminster Public School Division

November 8, 2010 • Beiseker • Beiseker Community School
Rocky View School Division No. 41

November 9, 2010 • Grande Cache • Grande Cache Community High School
Grande Yellowhead Public School Division No. 77

November 15, 2010 • Calgary • Westmount Charter School (Grades 6 to 8)
Westmount Charter School Society

November 16, 2010 • Edmonton • Ross Sheppard High School
Edmonton School District No. 7

November 17, 2010 • Pincher Creek • St. Michael's School
Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 4

November 18, 2010 • Calgary • Westmount Charter School (Grades 9 to 12)
Westmount Charter School Society

November 19, 2010 • Wabasca • Mistassiniy School
Northland School Division No. 61

November 22, 2010 • Calgary • Forest Lawn High School
Calgary School District No. 19

November 23, 2010 • Drayton Valley • Frank Maddock High School
Wild Rose School Division No. 66

November 23, 2010 • Edmonton • M.E. LaZerte High School
Edmonton School District No. 7

November 23, 2010 • Oyen • South Central High School
Prairie Rose School Division No. 8

November 25, 2010 • Hanna • J.C. Charyk School
Prairie Land Regional Division No. 25

November 25, 2010 • Morinville • Morinville Community High School
Greater St. Albert Catholic Regional Division No. 29

November 26, 2010 • St. Albert • Bellerose Composite High School
St. Albert Protestant Separate School District No. 6

November 30, 2010 • High Level • High Level Public School
Fort Vermilion School Division No. 52

December 2, 2010 • Medicine Hat • Medicine Hat High School
Medicine Hat School District No. 76

December 3, 2010 • Grassy Lake • Chamberlain School and Arden T. Litt Centre for Learning
Horizon School Division No. 67

December 3, 2010 • Vegreville • St. Mary's Catholic School
Elk Island Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 41

December 3, 2010 • Stettler • William E. Hay Composite High School
Clearview School Division No. 71

December 7, 2010 • Bonnyville • École Notre Dame High School
Lakeland Catholic School Division No. 150

December 8, 2010 • Calgary • Western Canada High School
Calgary School District No. 19

December 15, 2010 • Taber • W.R. Myers High School
Horizon School Division No. 67

December 16, 2010 • Lacombe • École Secondaire Lacombe Composite High School
Wolf Creek School Division No. 72

January 6, 2011 • Brant • Brant Christian School
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

January 11, 2011 • Calgary • Mountain View Academy
Mountain View Academy Society

January 12, 2011 • Calgary • Calgary Christian School
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

January 12, 2011 • Calgary • Menno Simons Christian
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

January 13, 2011 • Calgary • Master's Academy & College
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

January 14, 2011 • Didsbury • Didsbury High School
Chinook's Edge School Division No. 73

January 14, 2011 • Nobleford • Noble Central School
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

January 17, 2011 • High Level • La Crete Community School
Fort Vermilion School Division No. 52

January 20, 2011 • Picture Butte • Picture Butte High School
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

January 24, 2011 • Carmangay • Carmangay Outreach School
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

January 25, 2011 • Coaldale • John Davidson School / Huntsville School
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

January 25, 2011 • Champion • Champion Community School
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

January 25, 2011 • Grande Prairie • Grande Prairie Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 28
Grande Prairie Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 28

January 27, 2011 • Arrowwood • Arrowwood Community School
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

January 31, 2011 • Calgary • Heritage Christian Academy
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

February 1, 2011 • Vulcan • County Central High School
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

February 3, 2011 • Coaldale • Kate Andrews High School
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

February 4, 2011 • Milo • Milo Community School
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

February 11, 2011 • Coalhurst • Coalhurst High School
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

February 17, 2011 • Lloydminster • E.S. Laird Middle School
Lloydminster Public School Division

February 23, 2011 • St. Albert • École Secondaire Sainte Marguerite d'Youville
Greater St. Albert Catholic Regional Division No. 29

February 23, 2011 • Calgary • Glenmore Christian Academy
Palliser Regional School Division No. 26

March 1, 2011 • Calgary • Springbank Middle School
Rocky View School Division No. 41

March 3, 2011 • Calgary • Springbank Middle School
Rocky View School Division No. 41

March 4, 2011 • Calgary • Henry Wise Wood Senior High School
Calgary School District No. 19

March 4, 2011 • Calgary • Springbank Middle School
Rocky View School Division No. 41

March 7, 2011 • Fort McMurray • Fort McMurray Public School District
Fort McMurray Public School District No. 2833

March 9, 2011 • Calgary • Springbank Middle School
Rocky View School Division No. 41

March 10, 2011 • Airdrie • Rocky View School Division No. 41
Rocky View School Division No. 41

March 16, 2011 • Jasper • Jasper Junior/Senior High School
Grande Yellowhead Public School Division No. 77

March 16, 2011 • Crossfield • W.G. Murdoch School
Rocky View School Division No. 41

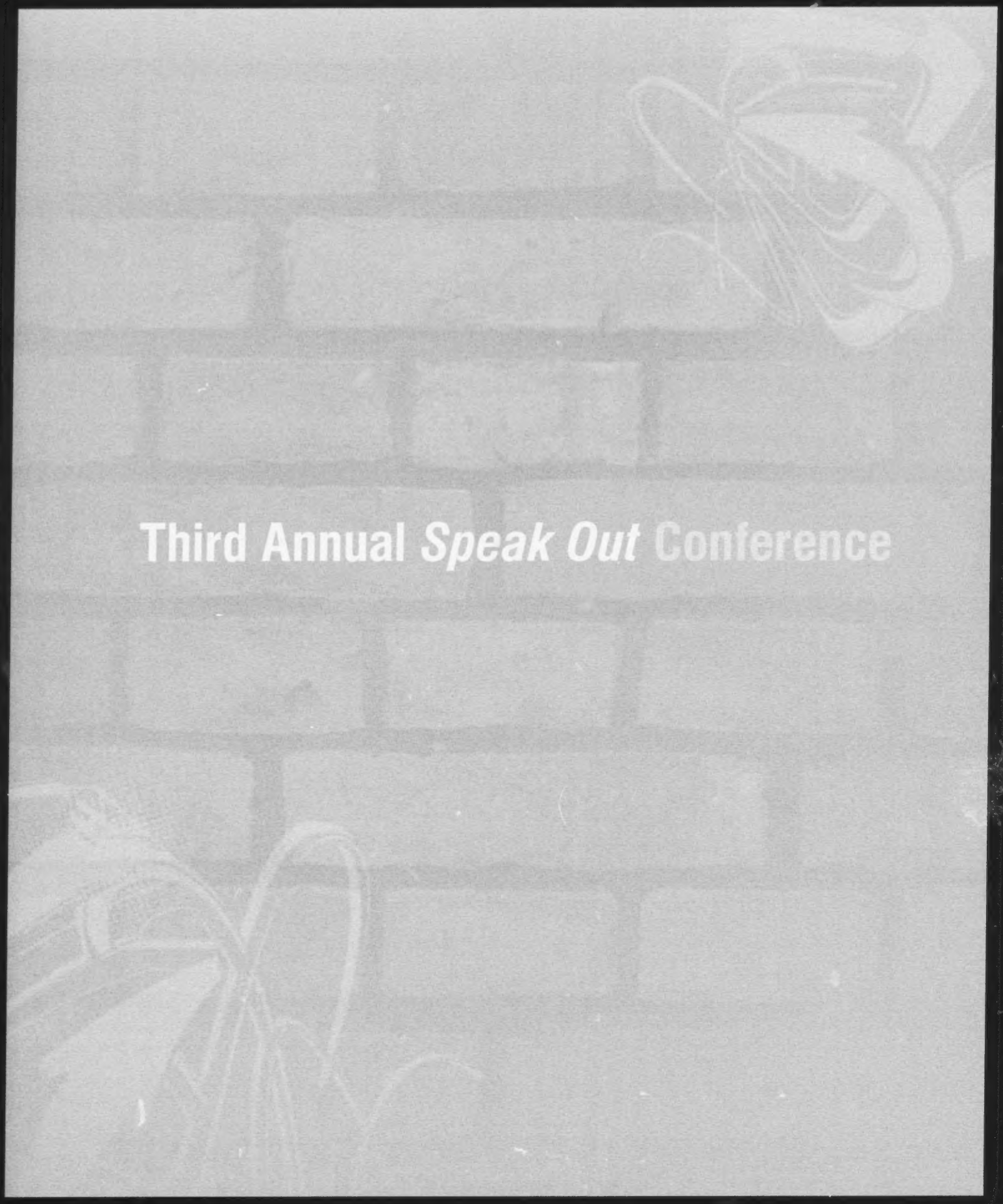
March 16, 2011 • St. Albert • St. Albert Catholic High School
Greater St. Albert Catholic Regional Division No. 29

March 24, 2011 • Chestermere • Chestermere High School
Rocky View School Division No. 41

March 28, 2011 • Cochrane • Cochrane High School
Rocky View School Division No. 41

March 29, 2011 • Calgary • Springbank High School
Rocky View School Division No. 41

*All DVD toolkit forums conducted after March 31, 2011, will be reported in the 2011–2012 Year in Review.


Third Annual *Speak Out* Conference

Third Annual *Speak Out* Conference

The third Annual *Speak Out* Conference provided a forum for students to engage with program staff from Alberta Education and to provide the student voice on ongoing programs and initiatives in Alberta Education. A total of 201 student delegates, 22 members of the Minister's Student Advisory Council, and 93 chaperones attended the conference in Edmonton from April 15 to 17, 2011.

The conference gave Alberta's youth and chaperones the opportunity to come together from across the province to discuss their perspectives and ideas on how to improve education. It was hosted by the Minister's Student Advisory Council and coordinated by the *Speak Out* team. The fourth Annual *Speak Out* Conference is scheduled for April 13 to 15, 2012, in Edmonton.

Where They Came From

Alhambra	Banff	Bashaw
Beiseker	Bonnyville	Brooks
Calgary	Cayley	Coaldale
Coalhurst	Condor	Delia
Dixonville	Drayton Valley	Eaglesham
Edmonton	Edson	Entwistle
Erskine	Fort Kent	Fort Macleod
Fort McMurray	Fort Saskatchewan	Gainford
Granum	Hanna	High Level
High Prairie	Jasper	Joussard
Kehewin	La Crete	Lacombe
Lamont	Leduc	Leslieville
Lethbridge	Lloydminster	Medicine Hat
Myrnam	Nobleford	Olds
Pincher Creek	Rainier	Red Deer
Redwater	Rimbey	Rocky Mountain House
Sherwood Park	Springbrook	Spruce Grove
St. Lina	St. Albert	Stettler
Strathmore	Tangent	Tilley
Vauxhall		

> "I really liked that *Speak Out* brings people from different places together. Gives different perspectives."[5]

5 This report shows all quotations from participants' contributions to *Speak Out* as originally written, with no changes to spelling, grammar, or punctuation.

What Happened

Students from across Alberta wishing to attend the conference were asked to submit an application form. To ensure that a diverse student population was represented at the conference—including a cross-section of students ages 14 to 19 with differing academic goals and varied personal interests and abilities—the *Speak Out* team encouraged all students to apply. The conference agenda is attached in Appendix A.

Day One

On the first day of the conference, participants were greeted by members of the Minister's Student Advisory Council. All participants, including students, chaperones and Alberta Education staff were then welcomed by the Minister of Education, Honourable Dave Hancock, and enjoyed a banquet and a keynote address by Adam Fletcher, a leading advocate, author, motivational speaker, and educator focused on youth voice and student engagement.

Day Two

On the second day of the conference, students took part in a session hosted by author and motivational speaker Sunjay Nath. Students then attended their three, self-selected 75-minute interactive workshops led by program areas in Alberta Education and members of the Minister's Student Advisory Council. (Please refer to the session descriptions included in Appendix B.) The *Speak Out* team hosted a concurrent conference for chaperones with presentations from program areas in Alberta Education. (Please refer to Appendix C for descriptions of the chaperone sessions.)

> "I liked having discussions in the sessions and having the opportunity to meet lots of new people. Sunjay and Adam were great speakers with great messages. I liked that we were treated like adults and responsible students."

Day Three

On the third day of the conference, all participants enjoyed another session hosted by author and motivational speaker Sunjay Nath. As was stressed throughout the conference, this was just the start of the conversation. All students were encouraged to go back to their schools and communities and host their own *Speak Out* forums using the *Speak Out* DVD toolkit. The conference was concluded formally by the Minister of Education, Dave Hancock.

Student voice

"I enjoyed this and am confident that my voice will be heard."

"I'm very glad that we could give our opinion and adults wouldn't comment or judge."

"It was interesting to talk about our viewpoints for the various questions, and compare to others."

What We Heard

Alberta Education staff worked with members of the Minister's Student Advisory Council to develop 12 unique workshops. Students could select their sessions prior to the conference. Each session of 45 students was facilitated by Alberta Education program area staff and by members of the Minister's Student Advisory Council.

CALM Redesign

- Students showed a basic knowledge of financial competencies going into the workshops, but they were able to expand their knowledge during the workshops—particularly about debt and compound interest.
- Students agreed that financial literacy is important and should be taught starting in the elementary grades by individuals with "real world" financial expertise.
- Students' suggestions for improving career and life management (CALM) overall included expanding the program over several years so that it can cover additional subject matter relevant to students' lives.
- Almost all students felt that the content of CALM was very important and that the concepts in CALM, including financial health education, career education, and sexual education should continue to be taught at an even deeper level.

Implementation of Student Voice

The data collected from this workshop will give Alberta Education a better understanding of students' current knowledge and future expectations, especially as it pertains to financial literacy, and will be used to help inform the redesign of CALM.

Competencies: Getting Ready for the Real World

- Students embraced the idea that there are many factors beyond academic performance that are important pieces of life and living in the "real world."
- The seven core competencies discussed during the workshop covered a broad range of skills that students use in their daily lives, both inside and outside of school. The seven core competencies are critical thinking and problem solving; creativity and innovation; social responsibility and cultural, global and environmental awareness; communication; digital literacy; lifelong learning, self-direction and personal management; and collaboration and leadership.
- By representing each of the competencies in unique ways, students were able to tap into their creativity to show how making improvements in any of these areas can help people enrich their careers and their lives; adjusting the curriculum to emphasize these types of life skills will help students become better citizens.

Implementation of Student Voice

Feedback received in this session was summarized in the document titled *Framework for Student Learning – Competencies for Engaged Thinkers and Ethical Citizens with an Entrepreneurial Spirit*. This draft document was circulated to the Curriculum Policy Advisory Committee in June 2011. Interviews and video footage collected at the conference were used as testimonials at the Action on Curriculum Research Roundtable 3 held on May 30 and 31, 2011, and then posted to the Alberta Education and *Speak Out* websites. A research report that includes conference feedback, information from the three research roundtables, and additional literature will also be prepared. This work will ultimately inform benchmarks or indicators for tracking the development of competencies.

Student voice

"If students were better informed on budgeting we would be able to thrive on our own after high school."

"Literacy, the ability to read and write, is a fundamental competency required for an educated Albertan. It is one of the basic elements upon which all other competencies build upon. For a 21st century Albertan, however, more than ever before, there must be an emphasis on digital literacy, which is the ability understand and analyze information using digital technology."

Designing School Facilities for the Future

- Students were eager to share their ideas about what their schools currently do well: providing open areas with natural light, good access to technology, and comfortable places to work.
- Students were candid about what schools can do better: provide additional space for studying and socializing, manage lighting and heating to make schools more comfortable, or simply give the walls some fresh paint.
- It was clear from the workshop that students feel that the layout and design of school facilities can have a major impact on their enjoyment of school – either positively or negatively – and that it is important to give school design significant consideration.

Implementation of Student Voice

Information collected in the workshop will be used in the Education Design Standards report, which will be submitted to the Ministers of Education and Infrastructure. Feedback will be shared with the Ministry of Infrastructure to inform conversations with school boards regarding planning. Information will provide key concepts for designing future schools.

Student voice

"School design doesn't have a direct impact on the learning, but the way a student feels ABOUT learning."

> "The sessions started to inspire me to make a change in my high school and then in my community and my school district."

Diploma Exam Mythbuster

- While students would generally prefer that less weighting be placed on one (or sometimes two) exams, they understand the reasoning behind highly weighted standardized tests.
- If diploma exams are to continue to be worth 50% of their final mark, students would rather that they come in the form of more exams spread out throughout the year.
- Students also had suggestions about how diploma exams are structured—they felt that there are ways of using more creative techniques to test students, beyond multiple choice or written response.
- Finally, students voiced concerns about the stress put on them by the diploma exams and how that affects their school year.

Implementation of Student Voice

Feedback collected at the workshop will be used to inform internal conversations at Alberta Education regarding exam structure. Any future changes to diploma exams will align with the transformation of education and associated curriculum changes.

Healthy Schools: Engaging Students in Action

- Students in the workshop fully grasped the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle – physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually. Students are currently promoting healthy lifestyles in many different ways, such as eating nutritious foods, being physically active, exercising and/or playing sports, and being positive role models who encourage others to be healthy.
- Students recognize that making positive choices about their health leads to increased confidence and self-esteem, in addition to feeling more fit, strong, and happy.
- While barriers like busy schedules, stress, negative influences, and less than perfect willpower can get in the way of pursuing a healthy lifestyle, they can often be overcome by managing time proactively, maintaining a positive attitude, surrounding oneself with helpful role models, and always striving to make good choices.
- Schools can play a key role in helping students lead healthy lifestyles by offering opportunities to be active in team sports, intramurals, or other physical activities; making healthy foods available; encouraging students to balance their time and lifestyles; assisting with stress management and providing emotional support; and continuing to provide lots of health information in school.

Implementation of Student Voice

The student voice will be used to inform the development of wellness-related programs of study. Information will also assist with developing student promotional materials for the Healthy Schools Initiative.

High School Flexibility Project

- Overall, the students in the room agreed with the need for students to direct their own learning to a certain extent. However, students still recognized that teachers are necessary to guide students through their education, ensuring that they remain focused and on track.
- Students felt that self-directed learning prepares students for their future—either in post-secondary education, or in a future career—by teaching independence, time management, and organizational skills.
- Students also thought that the flexibility provided by self-directed learning helps every student reach their full academic potential, no matter how they learn best.

Implementation of Student Voice

Information gathered from students in this workshop will be disseminated to principals and other educators throughout the province for further discussion about the High School Flexibility Project, and used specifically in conversations with the 16 project schools starting in May 2011. The debate process used at the workshop will also be offered to the 16 project schools so they can collect their own student feedback on the High School Flexibility Project.

> "I liked having a say in what the Ministry of Education does and having my opinion heard."

High School Funding

- Students were enlightened by the Alberta provincial budget and revenue sources, Alberta Education's budget, and Alberta's K–9 and 10–12 education funding models.
- When faced with producing education budgets, students felt that it was important to cater the funding allocation to particular student populations' characteristics.
- Students emphasized having "spares" for older students with more difficult course loads; employing teachers with enough experience to be competent, but young enough to be open-minded and flexible; having larger class sizes for students who are more inclined to pursue post-secondary education; and offering a variety of face-to-face regular courses.

Implementation of Student Voice

Since 2008, Alberta Education has been actively engaging Albertans to inform legislative proposals that will form a new *Education Act*. Depending on proposed changes, the funding model will likely require a subsequent review. Information collected within this workshop will help to incorporate the student voice into the everyday work of Alberta Education's Business Operations and Stakeholder Support Branch and into future funding models as the *Education Act* evolves.

High School Mentoring

- Overall, students were engaged in the session and appeared to have a strong understanding of the importance of mentoring.
- Students agreed that it was equally important to be mentored and to mentor someone else.
- The resources provided (e.g., website links) will allow students to further explore mentoring as a personal endeavour to partake in and to assist in building a career pathway.

Implementation of Student Voice

Feedback received at the workshop will directly support the work of the Alberta Mentoring Partnership. Specific contacts will be made with students and chaperones from the conference who expressed interest in getting involved. Career and technology studies courses on mentoring are currently being translated into French.

Locally Developed Courses

- Locally developed courses (LDCs) are developed and authorized by local school authorities to provide their students with learning opportunities that complement provincially authorized programs. LDCs allow school authorities to be innovative and responsive at the local level.
- LDCs can support language development and community interest in international languages through language and culture courses, or provide unique opportunities for students to explore a range of interests in subject areas or extend the learning outcomes in provincial programs.
- Students felt positively about LDCs as they provided a way for students to take interesting courses and express themselves.
- LDCs motivate students to stay in school and provide them with a way to meet other people with similar interests.

- Students would like to see more LDCs offered in schools to provide them with greater choice and flexibility in their school schedule.

Implementation of Student Voice

Information collected through this workshop will be reflected in the LDCs review final report at the end of October 2011. The report will include a specific section on what we heard from students from the conference. Recommendations from the review have the potential to appear in schools in a phased approach.

> "Definitely taking what I've gained back to my own school."

So You Want to Be a Teacher

- Students made it clear that having an engaging teacher who genuinely cares about them is ideal.
- Students want teachers who are passionate and enthusiastic about their classes and the subject matter that they teach and who build a culture of respect in their classrooms.
- Maintaining a sense of humour, coming to class prepared, and being flexible and open-minded are ways teachers can help build relationships with students and create positive learning environments.

In order to promote the teaching profession to young adults, students suggested using traditional means of promotion such as radio and television advertisement, as well as social media and other online mediums to get the message out.

Implementation of Student Voice

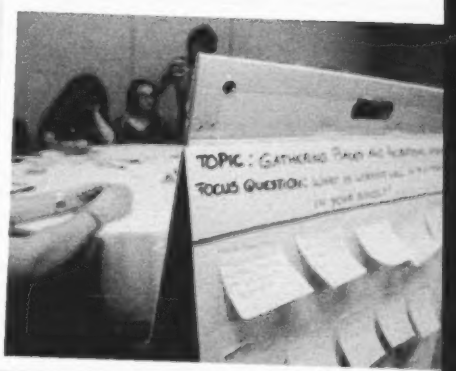
Feedback received in this workshop will be used to communicate with other stakeholders, such as the Alberta School Boards Association. The information will be analysed and considered for a marketing campaign that includes, but reaches beyond, the Alberta Education website. The "Why Teach?" PowerPoint will be made available to schools for use and posted to the Alberta Education website.

Teaching Quality

- According to the students that attended this workshop, the ideal teacher:
  - **Has a positive attitude.** The teacher uses humour in the classroom to keep students engaged and is able to give and take a joke. The teacher is enthusiastic about their job and genuinely wants students to do well and succeed in life.
  - **Has a teaching style that is creative, fun, and keeps students engaged.** The teacher isn't afraid to mix things up to keep the learning fresh. The teacher uses a wide variety of teaching methods to accommodate different learning styles.
  - **Gives and gets respect.** The teacher treats all students fairly and equally and does not pick favorites. The teacher acts as a mentor and role model for students.

Student voice

"I wanna be a teacher! YAY!"



SPEAK Out
ALBERTA STUDENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

Student voice

"I think using technology in school is a great way to learn and also teach."

- **Is flexible to student needs.** The teacher recognizes that students have lives and other demands outside of school and is willing to be flexible to accommodate students' schedules.
- **Is organized and has good time management skills.** The teacher recognizes that students' time is valuable, plans ahead to ensure that they are prepared for each class, and uses class time effectively.
- **Is knowledgeable and passionate about the subject they are teaching.** The teacher is able to bring real-life examples into the classroom to make the learning more applicable for students.
- **Is committed to continuous improvement and personal development.** The teacher does not act or feel as if they are better than the students and is constantly learning from students to improve themselves and their teaching ability.
- **Is actively involved in school activities.** The teacher takes an interest in the school and the students and sets an example for others to follow.

Implementation of Student Voice

Information collected at this workshop will be reflected in the updated draft *Professional Practice Competencies for Teachers* report to be consulted on in the fall 2011. Once accepted, the PPCT will likely require two years for implementation.

Technology for Today's Student

- Today's students want to access and use technology for their learning.
- There was strong consensus among the students that they need to be knowledgeable about common computer uses, about hardware and software, and that it is important for them to know how to use current technology to gather information. It seems that students are assumed to have this knowledge; however, this is not always the case.
- In terms of challenges and barriers to technology use, some students voiced frustration with teachers who don't know how to appropriately use technology in the classroom and about a lack of access to current high speed technology because of cost constraints (at home or at school) and restrictive school policies.
- Students thought that the use of technology can enhance the learning environment by allowing them to use laptops for assignments, use smartphones to submit homework, or access textbooks, tutors, or other information online.
- Students agree that technology is an important part of today's world and that it will continue to be an important part of the future.
- In order for students to use the power of technology to its full potential, students agree that Alberta Education should continue to pursue the use of technology in schools and strive to provide widespread access to technology and opportunities to learn how to use it.

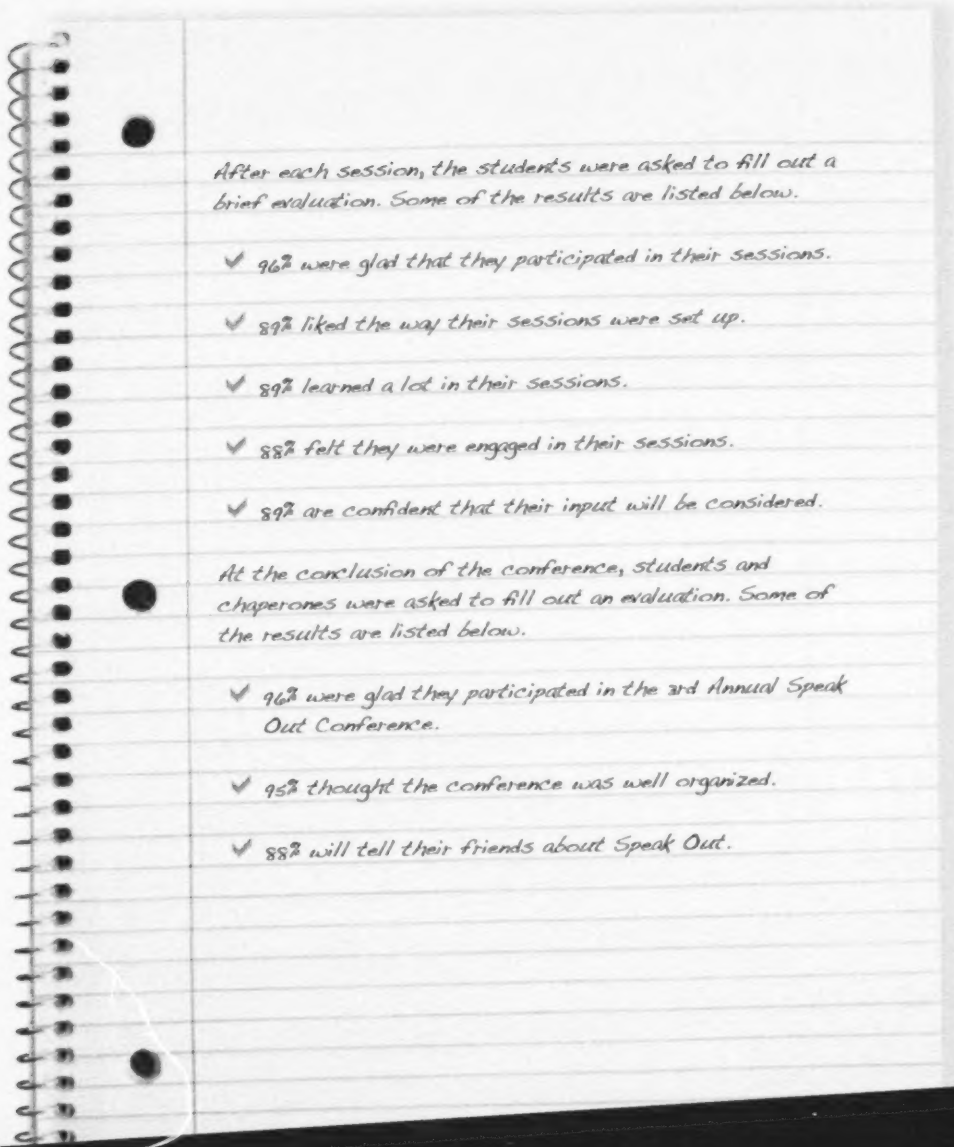
"*Speak Out* for life."

Implementation of Student Voice

Feedback received at the workshop will be used by Alberta Education's School Technology Sector with internal stakeholders. Information will also be shared with external stakeholders such as Jurisdiction Technology Contacts.

> "I'm very glad that I chose to come to *Speak Out* this year. I think that being here has really opened my eyes to all of the opportunities that I have when it comes to my education. I hope I'll be able to come again next year!"

How We Did



After each session, the students were asked to fill out a brief evaluation. Some of the results are listed below.

- ✓ 96% were glad that they participated in their sessions.
- ✓ 89% liked the way their sessions were set up.
- ✓ 89% learned a lot in their sessions.
- ✓ 88% felt they were engaged in their sessions.
- ✓ 89% are confident that their input will be considered.

At the conclusion of the conference, students and chaperones were asked to fill out an evaluation. Some of the results are listed below.

- ✓ 96% were glad they participated in the 3rd Annual Speak Out Conference.
- ✓ 95% thought the conference was well organized.
- ✓ 88% will tell their friends about Speak Out.

Appendix A – Conference Agenda

Third Annual *Speak Out* Conference

April 15–17, 2011

FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2011							
3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.	Conference Registration						Hotel Lobby
6:00 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.	Welcoming Remarks from Honourable Dave Hancock, Minister of Education						Robson Ballroom
6:15 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.	Dinner						Robson Ballroom
7:30 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.	Keynote Address – Adam Fletcher						Robson Ballroom
SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2011							
8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.	Breakfast						Robson Ballroom
9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.	Keynote Address – Sunjay Nath						Robson Ballroom
10:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.	Health Break						Robson Ballroom
10:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.	Healthy Schools	CALM Redesign	High School Flexibility	Technology	Teaching Quality	Chaperone Sessions	Alpine Lakes Rooms
11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.	Lunch/Gallery Walk						Robson Ballroom
1:15 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.	Diploma Exams	CALM Redesign	Competencies	Technology	Locally Developed Courses	Chaperone Sessions	Alpine Lakes Rooms
2:30 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.	Health Break						Robson Ballroom
2:45 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Diploma Exams	Designing Schools	High School Funding	High School Mentoring	So You Want to be a Teacher	Chaperone Sessions	Alpine Lakes Rooms
4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.	Free Time						
5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.	Dinner						Robson Ballroom
6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.	Free Time and Shuttles Available to West Edmonton Mall						
SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 2011							
8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.	Breakfast						Robson Ballroom
9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.	Leadership Workshop and Call to Action – Sunjay Nath						Robson Ballroom
10:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.	Health Break						Robson Ballroom
10:45 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.	Conference Closing Remarks by Honourable Dave Hancock, Minister of Education						Robson Ballroom

Appendix B – Session Descriptions (Students)

CALM Redesign

Have you ever read your cell phone contract, your gym membership contract, or the agreements you accepted on Facebook or iTunes? Do you understand the financial commitments of the future, such as car loans, student loans, mortgages, or investments? If not, you need to attend this session. This workshop will discuss financial issues that you *will* face, if you haven't already. You will learn about some of the financial decisions that affect young adults today, and, more importantly, you will be asked to share in a conversation with Alberta Education about the future of financial education.

Competencies: Getting Ready for the Real World

Did you really learn everything you need to know in kindergarten? To learn about the skills required outside of the sandbox, you would benefit from attending this workshop. It will focus on creating awareness of the competencies that are foundational to living, learning, and working in the 21st century. You will discuss which competencies (such as problem solving, communication, and the abiiity to work in a team) you think are critical to transition to the real world.

Designing School Facilities for the Future

If you're the type that doodles ideas for school building-designs on the front page of your calculus text book, you need to be in this workshop. We want your input into what makes a good school design now and in the future. The team wants to know what you would include in your dream school. What are your must-haves? Bring your creativity and get ready to design the ultimate learning destination!

Diploma Exam Myth-Buster

Have you ever asked: Why are my diploma exams worth 50% of my final grade? Now's your chance to find out the answer! Join us as we present this informative and riveting session answering your burning questions about the weighting of diploma exams. We will present the history of provincial exams from 1892 to present and information on Alberta's choice for the 50/50 split. Students will have the opportunity to offer suggestions on how issues from the current weighting may be addressed.

Healthy Schools: Engaging Students in Action

An apple a day keeps the doctor away... really? Does it? Agree or disagree and provide your insight into how students can be empowered to promote healthy schools. Learn about exciting projects under way, and what you can do to get involved with impacting the health of Alberta's youth.

High School Flexibility Project

Does your timetable make you cross-eyed? Do you want more control in your learning? Sixteen high schools from around the province are implementing innovative strategies to enhance student learning and engagement by removing the 25-hour-per-credit requirement. This workshop will review the notion of self-direction and seek your input on its importance to your learning. Get your debate tie ready and pick a side you want to fight for.

High School Funding

Did you know that your school gets $885 when you finish Math 30? Are you interested in knowing how else your school qualifies for funding? This session provides an overview of the current high school funding model, and will explain to you how funding is calculated and allocated to school jurisdictions. Students' feedback on the current model will be solicited. Various funding models from provinces across Canada will be discussed.

High School Mentoring

Join the High School Mentoring Team as they reflect on the qualities of a significant mentor in their lives. Explore opportunities to be a mentor yourself, and check out a new online CTS mentoring course. The session will challenge you to action and highlight what you can do at your school to inspire others to get involved.

Locally Developed Courses

What do sports performance, advanced placement (AP), guitar classes, or Polish have in common? Join us for the answer to this question and many more as we discuss locally developed courses. You will learn what they are and why they are relevant to you. You will also be given the opportunity to provide your opinion about whether you think these classes are important.

So You Want to Be a Teacher

Learn the facts about why our generation needs to be the next "teacher" and why we're positive it's the best career choice for you. An interactive, eye-opening experience awaits you!

Teaching Quality

"Teachers hold a special role in the life of young people. In our society the role of teacher is second in importance only to the parent" (Supreme Court of Canada, 1996). Being a teacher is an important responsibility, as the statement above from the Supreme Court of Canada points out. So, given the high standards expected of a teacher, what role does the government play in ensuring that teachers in Alberta's classrooms are well prepared and current? Join us in creating an ideal teacher. Share with the government the standards and skills you think teachers should have. Through an interactive workshop, you will explore the qualities that make a good teacher.

Technology for Today's Student

Do you have an opinion about using today's newest technology in your classroom? Join us to use collaborative technology to voice your opinion on the technology you need for learning. Come discuss current topics such as student-owned devices, access, challenges, and barriers.

Appendix C – Chaperone Session Descriptions

Action on Inclusion – An Update on Setting the Direction

The cultural shift that began with *Setting the Direction* is an important part of this province's educational reform. Transforming a complex system requires careful thought, research, analysis and continued meaningful interaction with all Albertans.

The *Setting the Direction Framework and Setting the Direction Framework, Government of Alberta Response* articulated a vision for an inclusive education system that meets the learning needs of all students, including those with diverse learning needs. *Setting the Direction* remains a priority, and work has moved forward since the *Setting the Direction Framework, Government of Alberta Response* was released in June 2010. A number of key milestones have been reached.

As we move forward, *Setting the Direction's* alignment with Inspiring Action on Education is being carefully considered. Many Albertans expressed that they're not sure how the pieces align or whether Inspiring Action means that work on *Setting the Direction* stops. As we move forward, you will likely notice a shift from discussion on "Setting the Direction" to "Action on Inclusion." *In Inspiring Action: A Discussion Paper*, there is specific policy direction on inclusion. The Government of Alberta has expressed its commitment to support stakeholders and service providers as an inclusive education system is implemented over the next few years. We have a collective responsibility to make sure that each student has a meaningful educational experience and is supported to be successful.

This information-sharing session will provide an update on the key milestones reached to date, and time will be provided for discussion with the participants.

Alberta Initiative for School Improvement

It's all about learning! Chaperones will receive background information on Alberta Initiatives for School Improvement (AISI)—and the parent's role within it—as well as a tour around the website. Chaperones can also try interactive activities based on actual AISI projects that are currently happening in the province and view videos of students participating or providing feedback about their school- or jurisdiction-based projects.

Competencies: Getting Ready For the Real World

The goal of this presentation is to provide an overview of the Curriculum Standards and Processes Project (CSPR) and to discuss the competencies for an educated Albertan. The presentation will create an awareness of the competencies being considered to enable students to develop their foundational knowledge and characteristics for living, learning, and working in the 21st century.

After sharing information about the proposed cross-curricular competencies, we will seek input from chaperones on the following:

- Are these the competencies that you believe your children/students will need in order to live, learn, and earn? Why? Why not?
- What competencies are missing or redundant?
- Are your children/students currently acquiring competencies in their K–12 schooling, or outside of school? If yes, what are they?
- What would be the best ways to develop these competencies?

Funding Framework for Alberta's K–12 Education System

In this session, we will provide an overview of how Alberta's K–12 education system is funded. This includes the types of school authorities that are funded, the differences in how each are funded, and a summary of the grants provided to school authorities under the Funding Framework.

Locally Developed Courses

In this session we will discuss with chaperones their perceived value of locally developed courses (LDCs). Currently, more than 2,200 of these courses are available in Alberta high schools. The Strategic Review of Locally Developed Courses will assess whether locally developed courses (including religious studies) in their current design and administrative format:

- Effectively and efficiently meet students' needs
- Provide school authorities with options for innovation and responsiveness
- Meet provincial standards for high-quality curriculum, policies, and processes
- Are aligned with Education's strategic direction and initiatives such as Inspiring Education, Inspiring Action, *Speak Out*, School Act review, Setting the Direction, High School Flexibility Project, the Value Review: What We Heard and the work that is underway to examine Education's curriculum products (development of programs of studies, balanced assessment and learning and teaching resources) and processes

Revised K–12 Mathematics Program

This will be an interactive session that addresses the following questions:

- What are the major changes in the revised K–12 mathematics program?
- What are the new high school mathematics courses?
- Why were these changes made?
- What philosophy of mathematics education is embedded in the program? How will students benefit from these changes?

So Your Child Wants To Be A Teacher?

The Workforce Planning Branch would like to inspire and motivate high school students to consider a career as a teacher or in a related career within the education sector. Learn the facts about why your child's generation needs to be the next "teacher" and why we're positive it's the best career choice for your child. In this session, we will discuss the following:

- Teaching is both challenging and highly rewarding
- Teaching offers many career opportunities
- Teachers possess unique skills
- Teaching is among society's most important professions
- There will be plenty of jobs available, as Alberta's student population will continue to grow

Technology for Today's Student

Join us to discuss the use of today's newest technology in Alberta classrooms. This session will include discussions on current topics, such as student-owned devices, access, challenges, and barriers to technology. You will have the opportunity to use collaborative technology to voice your opinion on the technology you feel is needed for learning.

The *Speak Out* Rap

by Geoffrey Nicholson and Katrina Wright

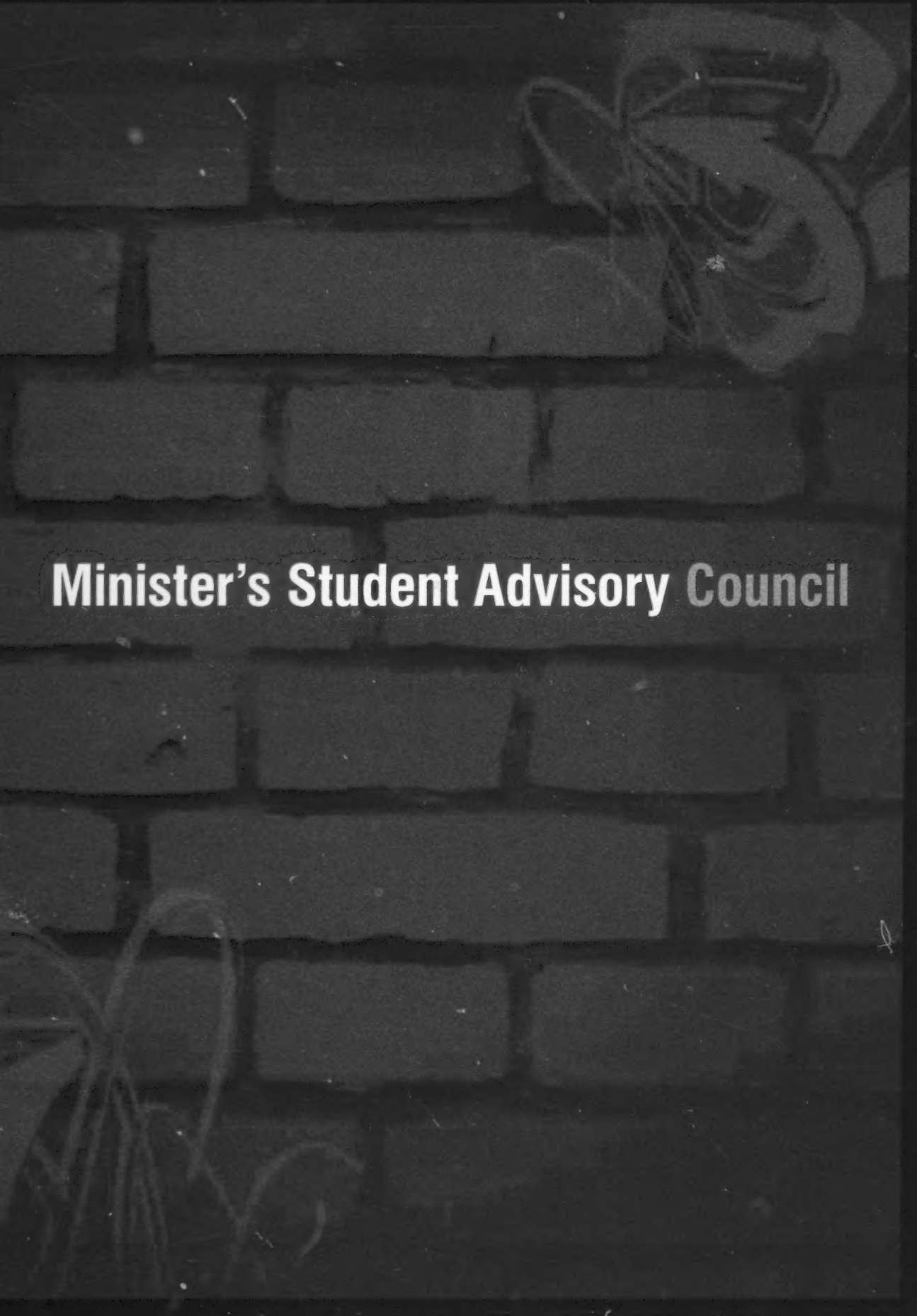
I'm here at *Speak Out* doing my thing,
Talking about issues that need to be changed.
Talking about things like school and stuff, these things that suck, I've had a nuff.

But I'm gunna make a difference
That's why i'm here.
Travelled cross Alberta far and near.
But it all seems worth it for that one goal and dream to have safe schools healthy and clean.
But i wanna go way deeper than that,
I wanna give schools that spirit that lacks I have inspiration... motivation to unite everyone as one nation.
But to do that i need your help,
to use the feeling that i felt.

When Sunjay was here he was talking,
He taught us the double jawking.
But for real no laughing it's time for change.
You need to realize this ain't a game.
We can make a difference here and now,
And if you listen I'll tell you how.
But everything I'm gunna say you already know, you just gotta take that information and give it a go.

If you take on the responsibility,
and maybe go back to your community.
You can try hosting a *Speak Out* forum,
it will get your youth involved a little more.
So don't be afraid to be the first one standing.
Cause everyone around doesn't have the same understanding.
That all you want to do is build a world with more choice
AND ALL YOU NEED IS A LITTLE STUDENT VOICE!!!

SPEAK
Out
ALBERTA STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE



Minister's Student Advisory Council

Minister's Student Advisory Council

The concept of the Minister of Education's Student Advisory Council was announced in the February 2008 throne speech:

"This government will not let up on its efforts to further strengthen our education system. To provide a fresh and youthful perspective on learning, the government will establish a youth advisory committee on education. This committee will explore new and innovative ways to improve the learning opportunities available to young Albertans."

The Minister's Student Advisory Council explores ways to improve education in Alberta, and members act as ambassadors of *Speak Out* in their communities and schools. Council members were selected based on the diversity of their backgrounds, opinions, and experiences, as described in their written application forms. The selection process involved reviewing those applications and conducting telephone interviews. Alberta Education reviewed the short list of candidates, and final approval was granted by the Minister of Education.

Student voice

"*Speak Out* has helped me be more outgoing, instead of turning down opportunities because I didn't want to get out of my comfort zone. I say yes and join more clubs."[6]

6 This report shows all quotations from participants' contributions to *Speak Out* as originally written, with no changes to spelling, grammar, or punctuation.

Who They Are

The council consists of 24 youths between the ages of 14 and 19. For selection purposes, the province is divided into geographical zones, ensuring broad provincial representation. Council members are appointed to serve a one-year term, starting in September of each year.

What They Did

Throughout their term, council members acted as ambassadors of *Speak Out*. Their responsibilities included the following:

- Participating in online discussions, polls, blogs, contests, and surveys on the interactive *Speak Out* website, with students from across the province
- Hosting a *Speak Out* forum and using the DVD toolkit in their school or community
- Presenting the results of their *Speak Out* forum to the Minister and local school authorities and decision makers
- Assisting with recruiting, hosting, and facilitating at the third Annual *Speak Out* Conference
- Participating in several Ministry meetings and provincial conferences, contributing a student voice and perspective
- Providing ongoing feedback on *Speak Out* initiatives, including the website, promotional products, recruitment strategies, and advertising campaigns

The *Speak Out* team prepared council members for success in these endeavours by providing orientation and training in leadership, public speaking, facilitation, and media.

Student voice

"Being on the Minister's Student Advisory Council has given me the courage to make a difference."

"MSAC ROCKS! This experience has changed my life! Thank you *Speak Out* team and Minister Hancock!"

> "The *Speak Out* team is awesome. I really appreciate all of the work you guys do for the students of Alberta! *Speak Out* for life!"

The Minister's Student Advisory Council took on a leadership role and met with key contacts and Ministry of Education stakeholders for further discussions. Presentations and information-sharing sessions were held on the following topics at council meetings in September 2010, January 2011, and May 2011:

- Demystifying assessment (Learner Assessment Branch, Alberta Education)
- Math diploma exams (Learner Assessment Branch, Alberta Education)
- Designing schools (Strategic Planning Branch, Alberta Education)
- Attendance board (School Accreditation and Disputes Resolution Branch, Alberta Education)
- Education program standards and assessment [Diploma Examinations Program (Humanities and Mathematics/Sciences) Branch, Alberta Education]

This year the student voice was more sought after than ever. Members of the Minister's Student Advisory Council participated in the following events and provided the student voice to these important initiatives:

- Premier's Council on Economic Strategy – October 4, 2010
  - This Council, appointed by Premier Ed Stelmach, brings together 12 members from around the world to share their advice on the actions Alberta needs to take to best position itself for 2040. In recognition of youths' important role in creating and contributing to Alberta's future, the Council invited 100 students in rural and urban communities across Alberta to come together and share their thoughts and ideas. Nine members from the Minister's Student Advisory Council participated in this important event.
- Inspiring Action on Education Public Engagement Meeting – October 7, 2010
  - Students sat on a panel, presented, and facilitated discussions regarding responses to Inspiring Action Transformation Guides and draft legislation.
- Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OEDC): Education Policy Meeting in Paris, France – November 4–5, 2010
  - A member of the Minister's Student Advisory Council sat on a panel that discussed the skills students need for success in the 21st century and what integral attributes every great teacher possesses.
- Annual *Speak Out* Conference – April 15–17, 2011
  - Members of the Minister's Student Advisory Council worked closely with Alberta Education staff in developing and delivering presentations to gather students' feedback on initiatives and projects currently underway in Alberta's education system.
- Action on Curriculum – Research Roundtables – April 11–12, May 6–7, May 30–31, 2011
  - Students presented at and participated in three roundtable discussions to share the student voice on the future of curriculum in Alberta high schools.
- Crime Prevention Conference – March 29–30, 2011
  - Two members of the Minister's Student Advisory Council and members from a variety of other government initiatives were invited to share the student voice on various aspects of crime prevention.
- Math and social science video shoots
  - Representatives from two program areas in Alberta Education, Math and Social Sciences, invited a small group of students to participate in filming videos to promote new projects and initiatives within these areas.

Student voice

"I realized how much thought and planning goes into my education and that the people in Alberta Education are working hard to make sure that the students are receiving the best education they can."

2011–2012 Minister's Student Advisory Council

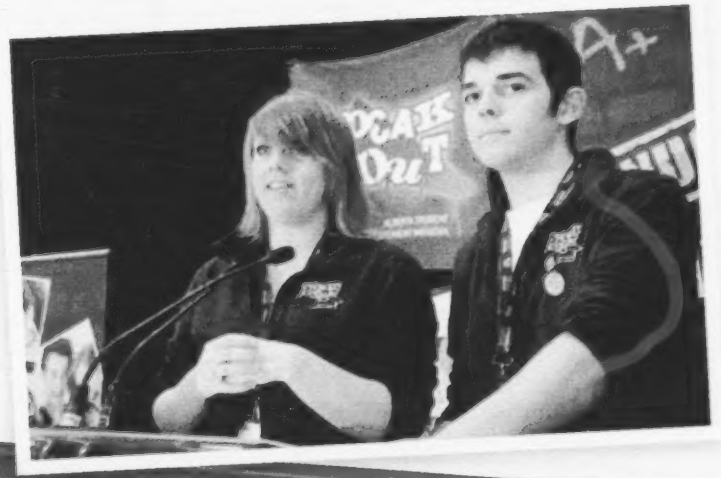
The council application process and selection are completed annually. All interested youth, including current council members seeking renewal, must submit an application. The 2011–2012 council was publicly announced in a Government of Alberta information bulletin on June 27, 2011. The members of the council play a very important role in ensuring that the student voice continues to be sought and considered in the education system.

> "The skills that I have developed on this council helped me to get into my university of choice, get a scholarship, and helped me pick my program – I can't wait to be a teacher! Thank you one million times!"

Student voice

"My eyes have been opened to see how much power my voice does have."

"I found my voice and I'm proud to give my opinion."



OECD
OECD Education Ministerial Meeting
Investing in Human and Social Capital: New Challenges
Réunion ministérielle de l'OCDE sur l'éducation
Investir dans le capital humain et social : Les nouveaux enjeux

What's Next?

What's Next?

During this past year, the *Speak Out* team focused its efforts on working with students, educators, jurisdictions, and other education stakeholders, to let them know that the education system needed student perspectives, ideas, and their voice. *Speak Out* also continued to share student voice with the educational system, including government, universities, school boards, trustees, superintendents, principals, teachers, and schools. The momentum of student engagement and commitment to the student voice continues to grow. In order to improve the educational opportunities for youth in Alberta, we must recognize the value of the student perspective and provide opportunities for the conversations to continue, both locally and provincially. The *Speak Out* team will continue working with education stakeholders to help implement ideas that come from the student voice and integrate the student voice into policy-making and planning.

As *Speak Out* enters its fourth year, the team will continue to reach out to Alberta's youth, encouraging them to share their ideas and to apply for both the conference and the council. The interactive and fully moderated website, with its growing membership, will continue to contribute to this valuable conversation. Essential small focus group discussions will occur again around the province at *Speak Out* forums hosted by the *Speak Out* team. Students or schools can host their own *Speak Out* forum using the DVD toolkit any time during this coming school year. Use of the DVD toolkit not only builds local capacity and local engagement, but also enables more students to find their voice and *Speak Out*.

Interested in hosting a *Speak Out* forum? Email **speakout@gov.ab.ca** to receive a free DVD toolkit and *Speak Out* materials. The *Speak Out* team will continue to work with schools and jurisdictions to systematically follow up with *Speak Out* forum hosts—both students and school administration—to track how things have changed since the conversation was first started at the *Speak Out* forum hosted in their schools. We look forward to being able to demonstrate how the student voice can make—and has made—a difference for Alberta's youth and their education.

The fourth Annual *Speak Out* Conference is tentatively scheduled for April 13 to 15, 2012, in Edmonton. Once again the *Speak Out* team will match members of the Minister's Student Advisory Council with program areas in Alberta Education to develop interactive workshops. Students in Alberta will have the opportunity to provide input and feedback on ongoing programs and initiatives in education. Mark your calendars and apply early—this event fills up quickly!

> "Meaningful student involvement in education turns the microphone around, making the student the examiner as well as the examined, and the feedback loop an engine for school change. Their most important partners need to be engaged now, and that is what meaningful student involvement is all about."
>
> – Adam Fletcher, internationally recognized expert in youth engagement

The Minister's Student Advisory Council will continue to work closely with Alberta Education, at their regular meetings with the Minister of Education and other Alberta Education staff, as well as at other events and meetings. Council members will also be supporting an international symposium, Action on Wellness, hosted by Alberta Health and Wellness, in the fall. Most importantly, council members will take a leadership role by hosting their own *Speak Out* forums in their schools or communities, using the DVD toolkit.

The *Speak Out* team is continually developing innovative ways to gather, share, and integrate the student voice for all education stakeholders. We are looking forward to another exciting year of student engagement!

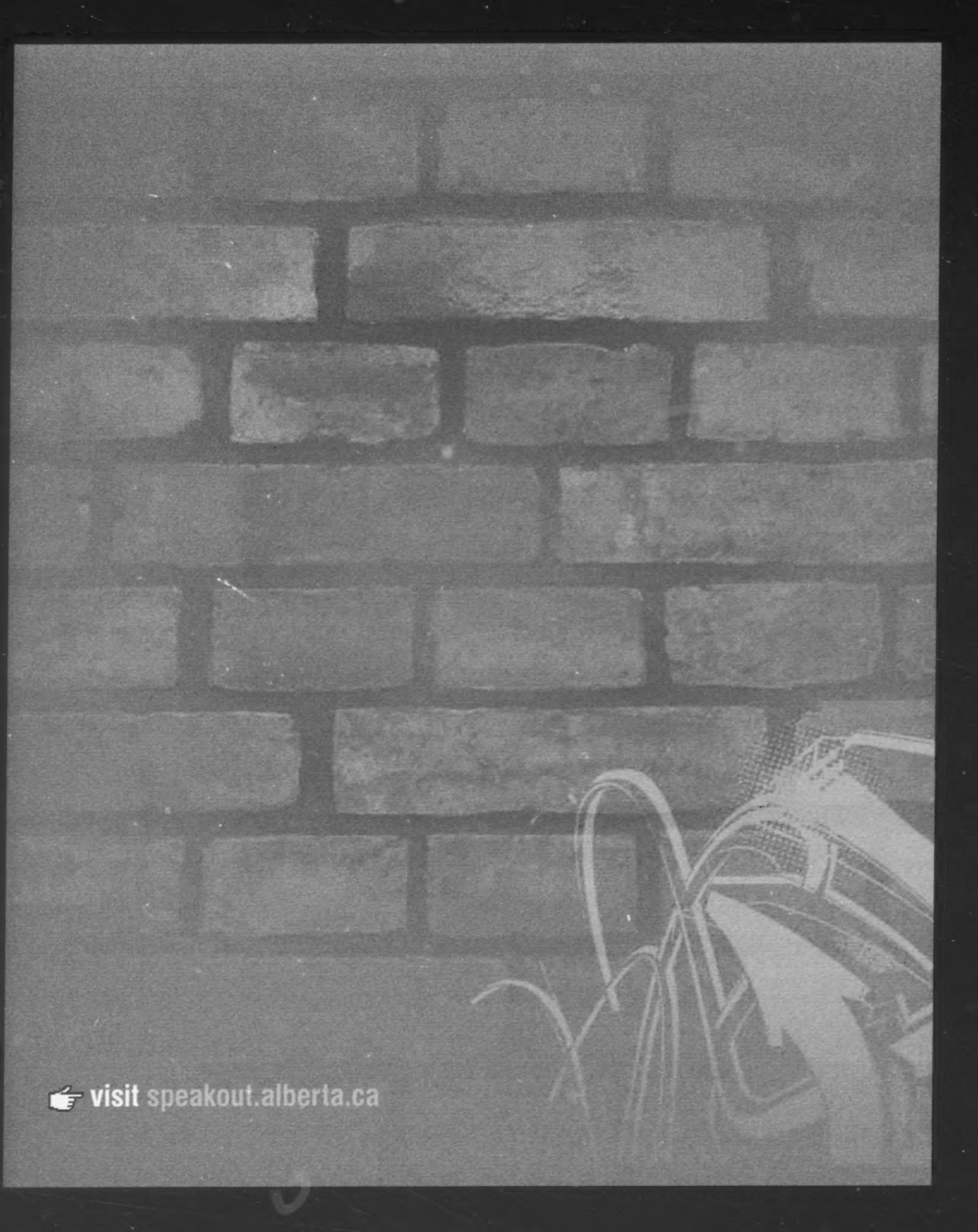
Acknowledgments

Speak Out – the Alberta Student Engagement Initiative sincerely appreciates the support, guidance, and leadership offered by the Minister of Education's office; the Deputy Minister's office; the People and Research Assistant Deputy Minister's office; and Alberta Education's executive team, Legislative Services, Communications, and Student Engagement Committee. *Speak Out* also gratefully acknowledges its sponsors.

The *Speak Out* team would like to add a special note of appreciation to staff from Alberta Education and other ministries who collaborated on various elements of the initiative. In particular, *Speak Out* would like to acknowledge staff in the following areas:

- Action on Inclusion
- Alberta Employment and Immigration
- Alberta Health and Wellness
- Arts, Communications and Citizenship
- Business Operations and Stakeholder Support
- Career and Technology Studies
- Children and Youth Services: Family Violence Prevention, Bullying and Youth Strategies
- Corporate Planning
- Cross-Ministry Services
- Curriculum
- Diploma Examinations Program (Humanities and Mathematics/Sciences)
- Financial and Administrative Services
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit and Field Services
- French Language Education Services
- Information and Technology Management
- Inspiring Action on Education
- International Education Services
- Learner Assessment
- Learning Resources Centre
- Mathematics and Science
- Operational Standards
- Policy and Planning
- Professional Standards
- School Act Review
- School Accreditation and Disputes Resolution
- School Finance
- School Research and Improvement
- School Technology
- Service Alberta
- Setting the Direction
- Special Education
- Strategic Planning
- Teacher Development and Certification
- Web Services
- Workforce Planning and Development

Finally, the biggest thank you of all must go to the students in Alberta who have enthusiastically contributed to the website, participated in *Speak Out* forums, attended the Annual *Speak Out* Conference, and been active members on our Minister's Student Advisory Council. Thank you for speaking out and sharing your perspectives and your voice.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